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For
All my friends who sent their
good wishes during my illness
in the latter half of 1988

THE WORD AND THE WORLD

India's Contribution to the Study of Language

BIMAL KRISHNA MATILAL

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PREFACE

In this monograph I deal with what is today called 'philosophy of language' on the basis of an analysis of materials drawn exclusively from the writings of classical Indian philosophers. Both Indological scholars and modern philosophers will find here something to interest them. Students of linguistics, whether in India or elsewhere, will also benefit from a careful study of the issues and problems discussed here. While I have avoided facile comparison with any modern view and let the texts speak for themselves, I have tried to make my presentation clear, concise and at the same time comprehensive. What is given here is, in short, not simply an exposition but also a critical analysis of the classical theories.

A brief account of how I came to write this monograph may be in order here. A few years ago, I was invited by the Director of the Central Institute of Indian Languages at Mysore (Mānasagaṅgotrī), India, to give a seminar on Indian theories of semantics, while the Institute was acting as host to an International Conference on Semiotics. I presented the *sphoṭa* doctrine along with some other issues discussed by the grammarians and philosophers of classical India. The audience consisted of scholars and students generally from the field of modern linguistics, and most of them were non-Sanskritists. They found my presentation not only intelligible but also of absorbing interest because, as it was remarked by one participant, none of the available books in English on the subject made the discussion accessible to non-Sanskritist linguists or philosophers. A book to fill this need would be welcome.

Although philosophy of language has a very long and rich tradition in classical India (since it was connected with extensive study of Sanskrit grammar), a comprehensive survey of the literature from a modern point of view is still lacking. Several good monographs are available dealing with some particular aspects or some particular authors. For example, of the modern authors, four at least deserve mention: Gaurinath Sastri, Bishnupada Bhattacharya, K. Kunjunni Raja and K. Subrahmania Iyer. What they have written is philosophically interesting. But while Sastri and Iyer are exclusively concerned

with one author—Bhartṛhari (Iyer's study of Bhartṛhari is very valuable), Bhattacharya covers the area of dispute between the Vaiyākaraṇas and the Naiyāyikas. Raja gives a somewhat comprehensive survey, but he seldom provides adequate analysis of the views he refers to. M. Biardeau's monograph on Bhartṛhari is illuminating, but her approach is decidedly different from mine as well as from that of many others. S. D. Joshi's and G. Cardona's persistent study of the Pāṇinian school of grammar has been very helpful and philologically sound. However, the present monograph attempts to strike a new course, as I have emphasized already.

The book is divided into two parts: one deals with the general issues and problems and presents a concise survey; the other picks out several special topics for analysis and discussion. In Part I, the problem of universals (chapter 4) defines one end of the parameter of what is understood by philosophy of language in India, and the *kāraka* theory (chapter 5) defines the other end of the parameter. Another important issue is why and how we derive *knowledge* from linguistic utterances. This is actually connected with the broader philosophical problem: the epistemology of testimony. A certain amount of interest in this problem has been recently visible among some modern analytical philosophers. There is little scope here to discuss the problem with all its implications, and chapter 6 provides only a synoptic view. A project is in progress to prepare an anthology on this very important topic, in which classical arguments will be examined *vis-à-vis* the discussion and arguments of modern philosophers. It is, however, difficult to say at this stage, to what extent this attempt will be successful.

The first three chapters of Part II focus upon the *sphoṭa* theory, which is recognized in some quarters as a unique contribution of the Sanskrit grammarians to the global philosophy of language. I have tried to give prominence to Bhartṛhari's view, separating it from that of the former and the later grammarians. Chapter 10 deals with an important issue which caused prolonged controversy among different schools of Indian philosophers, and some parts of the discussion are reminiscent of the modern problem about G. Frege's Context Principle. (Professor P. K. Sen and the present author wrote an article in a comparative vein, which appeared in *Mind*, January 1988. Interested readers are requested to consult the article.) Chapter 11 deals with the problem of translation *vis-à-vis* Bhartṛhari's holistic

view of language. It occasionally refers to a few lines from J. Derrida's *On Grammatology* and the dispute over the primacy of the scriptic over the sonic (e.g. logocentrism) in linguistics. The reason for this sudden reference to Derrida is historical: part of the chapter was written as a paper for a seminar organized by J. Derrida and his colleagues. Chapter 12 is an elaboration of Bhartṛhari's view of cognition. I have tried to explain a rather obscure passage of Bhartṛhari and used some comments of Dharmakīrti and Abhinavagupta to illuminate what I have called 'the Bhartṛhari thesis'.

Three appendices have been added to the book. While they are to some extent connected with the main topic of the book, they are also of independent interest. There is however just one argument throughout the book. This is reflected in the subtitle: India's Contribution to the Study of Language. Different chapters and sections jointly substantiate the subtitle. In this connection it will be clear that, in classical India, different disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy, logic and even aesthetics or literary criticism were interconnected—more intimately than we are prepared to allow today.

In July 1988 I fell seriously ill, and for a period of six months I was 'out of touch' and stopped my academic activities. Friends from all over the world sent their best wishes for my recovery. I wish to thank all of them here and dedicate this book to them. I prepared the final version of the manuscript of this book while I was on the way to recovery.

My special thanks are due to Heeraman Tiwari for helping me to locate some bibliographic details, Dr G. Colas for help in reading proofs, and Humaira Ahmed in preparing the manuscript.

7 March 1990

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PART I
GENERAL STUDIES

1

INTRODUCTION

I

If philosophy is an attempt to understand the world around us, as it is revealed in our ordinary and not so ordinary experiences, and if it is in terms of our language that we apprehend the world, then an understanding of how our language works would be almost the first step in studying philosophy. But perhaps this is demanding too much, even if we grant both of these antecedent conditions. It may be that we understand the world in terms of our language, and this would imply that our thinking about the world necessarily involves the use of language. Philosophy (contrary to the famous pronouncement of Wittgenstein which still has a strong hold among modern philosophers) may not always be thought of as being concerned with rectifying the misunderstanding we have of our own concepts, or of our own language (the curing of the 'bewitchment' of our intellect by language). For a long time in the West, philosophy was thought to be concerned with the established truths of a very general kind, with metaphysics and ethics, with other truths to be arrived at through the power of reasoning. In this scheme, philosophy of language occupied no important place. Since Descartes, it was noticed that the starting point of the subject was epistemology. Later, in the post-Fregean period, some analytical philosophers believed that 'philosophy of language' in a specific sense should constitute the starting point of philosophical studies.

Human language is a very complex phenomenon. But its supreme relevance lies in the recognition of the fact that thinking is almost impossible without language, and hence by analysing language we can analyse thought. Our thoughts are communicable by means of language. This is not an accidental connection. We use language to communicate thoughts because we have an implicit understanding of how our language works. These principles governing the use of

language are shared, though implicitly, by all language-users. In fact, in our sense, language and thought may be simply indistinguishable. One modern philosopher, Dummett (1980, 442), who firmly believes that the philosophy of language is 'the base of the entire structure' we call 'philosophy', argues that there is a very general aspect of our concern with language and this concern is with the fundamental outlines of an account of how language functions—it is in this sense that the philosophy of language is to be regarded as the foundation of all the rest in philosophy. This overall concern with how our language works was not the chief concern of most classical Indian philosophers, except for the grammarians like Bhartṛhari. Thus, with Bhartṛhari and all post-Bhartṛhari grammarians, language acquired a metaphysical importance. Although Bhartṛhari sometimes asked questions similar to those of post-Fregean philosophers, what he supplied as answers may not engage the attention of modern analytical philosophers. Hence we must conclude that the basic attitude as well as the conclusion was very different, as far as classical India was concerned.

II

When we talk about Indian philosophy of language we must take a slightly different approach. In a specific sense, the philosophy of language was part of Indian philosophical activity from the beginning of its history. One reason was to recognize the Scriptures' (*Vedas'*) authority in certain areas of our belief system. The Indians do not always talk about 'revelation' in the way it is understood in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The Scriptures were regarded by tradition as embodying certain truths derived from the supposedly 'revealed' insights of the sages called 'seers' (=*ṛṣi*). *Veda* thus means a body of knowledge, in fact, a source or 'means' of knowledge. The Scriptures are in fact a body of statements. This linguistic nature of the Scriptures (in the case of the Buddhists, the dialogues of the Buddha fulfil the same purpose, and the same is true of Jainism and Mahāvīra) reveals gradually the fact that language or 'verbal testimony' is an important source of knowledge, like perception and inference. This has led to the general inquiry about how a bit of language, a word or a sentence, imparts knowledge to the hearer. Therefore, what we call the philosophy of language in India has always formed a part of the classical philosophers' general epistemological inquiry, part of the *pramāṇa-*

śāstra, the theory of 'evidence' for belief or knowledge. The question was: how does a linguistic utterance, through the communication of its meaning, impart knowledge to the hearer? For it is observed that not simply the Scriptural statements but also any ordinary statement can and does impart knowledge. Strictly speaking, most of our knowledge today is derived from reading and listening, hence we can say that it is linguistically communicated.

In particular, however, analysis of sentences and words into significant components, the relationship between word and meaning, classification of words according to semantic contribution, division of words with reference to the division of ontological categories, logical and pyschological factors in knowing the meaning of a sentence, philosophical significance of grammatical analysis, and principles of linguistics—all these have been repeatedly discussed by the philosophers in India over the centuries. This discussion constitutes the vast amount of writing which we can very profitably explore to talk about the classical Indian philosophy of language. In this book we shall adopt this line of research. As the list of topics (some of them have been mentioned above) is rather vast, it would be difficult to provide an exhaustive account. I shall aim at limited comprehensiveness, focusing my attention upon certain particular issues.

III

Writing in 1969 on 'Sanskrit Philosophy of Language' F. Staal commented that 'at times almost excessive preoccupation with language on the one hand and with philosophy on the other, may indeed be regarded as a characteristic of Indian civilisation' (Staal, 1969, 463). What Staal has called 'Sanskrit philosophy of language' in his survey of the modern research in this field is almost identical with what I wish to call Indian philosophy of language. For, to be sure, it refers to the various views and controversies surrounding the nature of language and meaning as well as the method of language acquisition put forward by Indian philosophers (although they all wrote in Sanskrit).

Śabda in this writing will be often translated as 'language' unless the context demands that it be translated as 'linguistic utterance', that is, words and sentences. A piece of knowledge derived from the linguistic utterance (the hearer's knowledge) is accorded (by all philosophers except the Vaiśeṣikas and the Buddhists) a special status

side by side with perception and inference. It is not subsumed under perception, nor under inference either. When, for example, my father tells me that his grandfather (whom I did not see) was six feet tall, my knowledge derived from his statement is unique in the sense that it is neither perceptually obtained (my father cannot transmit his 'perception' to me) nor inferentially arrived at on the basis of a 'mark' or an evidence (which must be known to be concomitant with what I infer). But my father's words themselves coupled with my implicit *trust* in him generates the required knowledge in me (that my great-grandfather was six feet tall). Vātsyāyana while commenting upon *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.52, cites as examples scriptural statements about heaven etc., imparting knowledge about such otherwise unknown facts.

The best way to introduce the problem of deriving knowledge from linguistic utterance would be to go back to Akṣapāda, the author of the *Nyāyasūtra*. According to him, the 'word' is a *pramāṇa* 'a means of knowledge' and he defines it in the *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.7, as follows:

> *Śabda* or Word is what is instructed by a trustworthy person (*āpta*).

Here *śabda* stands for *śabdapramāṇa*, i.e., the means of knowledge called 'word'. *Āpta* stands for a trustworthy or a reliable person. It is important to note that Akṣapāda did not identify *śabda* with scriptures.

Vātsyāyana's comment here is more interesting. First he defines the word *āpta*:

> An *āpta* is one who is in a position to instruct or command (*upadeṣṭā*) and he must be qualified by the following characteristics. He has realized or perceived the *dharma* and he is engaged in making a statement with a desire to communicate (*cikhyāpayiṣayā*) the objects or facts as he has perceived them.

Vātsyāyana explains 'perception of facts' as 'having complete knowledge of the fact' (cf. *āpti*). Then he makes a more significant comment; this definition of '*āpta*' or a trustworthy person is common to all, i.e., the saints, the educated Āryas and the Mlecchas. This indicates that any person who is an expert and knowledgeable about certain facts would qualify as an *āpta* irrespective of caste or creed or sex. The element of trust therefore is an important constituent when we take a linguistic utterance of a person to be a source of knowledge (for more on this see ch. 6).

2

ON GRAMMAR AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

I. PĀṆINI AND YĀSKA

It has often been claimed in recent times that in the Indian scientific and philosophical tradition, mathematics plays a less crucial role and its place is taken by grammar or linguistics. The traditional name for this discipline is *Vyākaraṇa*. Its foremost scholar of great importance was Pāṇini. There were, to be sure, a number of pre-Pāṇinian Sanskrit grammarians, but Pāṇini's glory eclipsed that of all others. Linguistics, and along with it the philosophy of language, developed in India from the fifth century BC, although not much is known about these subjects in the early centuries except for the work of three grammarians (Pāṇini, followed by Kātyāyana and Patañjali), and that of the etymologists (called Nairuktas) such as Yāska. In the West, linguistics developed relatively late, although for an early discussion of the philosophy of language one can go back to Plato's *Cratylus*.

Vyākaraṇa (literally it may mean 'analysis') or grammar was regarded as the gateway to other disciplines. It was part of the curriculum for the study of the *Vedas*, the Scriptures (literally 'the body of knowledge'). It was traditionally called a *Vedāṅga*, one of the six 'limbs', i.e. auxiliary (or preparatory) disciplines, for the successful study of the *Vedas*. The six ancillaries include grammar, phonetics, etymology, metrics, astronomy, and the science (or art) of rituals. Of these, grammar was regarded as the 'prime mover' (cf. *Pāṇinīya Śikṣā*, 42) of Vedic studies. The early development of 'grammar' or what may be termed as 'the science of language' led to many interesting results. Intimate relationship between logical and grammatical categories was noticed: what may be called certain 'universals' of logic and language were noted, distinction between language and metalanguage, or rather between *use* and *mention*, was underlined, and metalinguistic notions were more clearly understood and treated

accordingly. For example, in rule 1.1.68, Pāṇini notes the distinction between the practices in the 'language' of grammar and in ordinary language. In grammar, by the use of a word (say 'cow') we refer to the word itself, while in ordinary language by the use of a word we refer to its meaning, the object, a cow. Pāṇini seems to say that in normal language when we use a word to refer to itself, i.e. where we *mention* it, we mark it (in Sanskrit) with an *iti* (which, incidentally, functions as quotation-marks in Sanskrit), but in grammatical rules where we frequently *mention* the word instead of *using* it, it is convenient to have the reverse convention: mark the word with *iti* when we *use* it and leave it unmarked when we mention it (possible exceptions were also noted in the same rule, e.g. the technical terms of grammar itself should be Used, not Mentioned). It is also argued by some today that the methods of grammatical studies introduced by Pāṇini can be extended to a variety of languages and linguistic systems. A close study of this system may supply additional evidence to the yet unproven thesis about 'universals' of grammar.

Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (5th–4th c, BC) is certainly a monumental work—an achievement of encyclopaedic research and technical perfection, a comprehensive grammar of the Sanskrit language which includes both the Vedic Sanskrit and what is called 'classical' or *laukika* Sanskrit. It consists of nearly four thousand *sūtras*, short grammatical rules in aphoristic style. A comparatively simple outline of Pāṇini's subject-matter in *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (which is decidedly very complex in execution) may be attempted here. *Vyākaraṇa* may be taken to mean the process of analysing language and in such a process the first element we reach is a sentence, which consists necessarily of a verb in various tenses and moods, and a number of substantives called *kārakas* 'causal or contributory factors' to the action denoted by the verb or the action-word, and also the qualifiers and other related items belonging to such *kārakas*. The forms of verbs found in sentences can be viewed as made up of an original root/stem called *dhātu* and a number of endings called *pratyayas*. These endings, Pāṇini thinks, give the verbs their temporal and modal significance. While dealing with verbal endings, Pāṇini notices that there are a vast number of verbal derivatives which are treated as substantives and take *kāraka* inflections, but which can be analysed into root/stems and a set of inflections which he calls *kṛt*. This has led to the interesting philosophical discussion between the Nairuktas (from *Nirukta*) or etymologists and the Pāṇinīyas (grammarians who follow Pāṇini and comment on his

system of grammar). According to the etymologists, all nouns (substantives) are derived from some verbal root or other. Yāska in his *Nirukta* refers to this view (in fact defends it) and ascribes it to an earlier scholar Śākaṭāyana. This would require that all words are to be analysable into atomic elements, 'roots' or 'bases' and 'affixes' or 'inflections'—better known in Sanskrit as *dhātu* and *pratyaya*. I shall try a possible analogical explanation. It may be significant to note that *dhātu* in ordinary Sanskrit meant 'base metal' and *pratyaya* meant, among other things, 'a causal factor' or a 'condition' (a constituent), in dependence upon which a product will come into being (see the meaning of *pratyaya* in any Buddhist text). Hence the implicit physical analogy was: usable words of a language were like finished products, produced from the 'bases', being modified or transformed by the causal factor, inflection. There was also an implicit ritualistic analogy: just as in a Vedic sacrifice, an ordinary object or a naturally produced object, e.g. some grains of rice, could not be used as such but had to be ritualistically 'cleansed' (cf. *saṃskāra*) by sprinkling water, or with *mantras*, a root or a stem cannot be used directly, or as such, in an actual linguistic expression (sentence, etc.) unless it is 'cleansed' with inflections! This last point is realized in Pāṇini (rule 2.3.46) where the first *Vibhakti* or first triplet for nominal stem marker,[1] is assigned the function of bringing out 'the meaning of the stem itself' (*prātipadikārtha*), and the nominative or accusative relation is expressed by the verbal ending contained in the sentence (Pāṇini, rule 3.4.69, see also Thieme, 1971, 573–95).

Yāska reported the view of Gārgya who opposed Śākaṭāyana (both preceded Pāṇini, since Pāṇini mentioned them by name) and held that not all substantival words or nouns (*nāma*) were to be derived from roots, for certain nominal stems were 'atomic' in the sense of being non-derived. The relative chronology between Yāska and Pāṇini is uncertain and modern scholars are divided in their opinion about making one precede the other. I believe Thieme is right in holding Pāṇini to pre-date Yāska. In any case, Pāṇini seems to have accepted the view of Gārgya, and hence in his monumental derivational system, underived nominal stems were recognized as facts. However, Pāṇini was also aware of the opposite view of Śākaṭāyana, and in his *Uṇādi* section he made room for rules for deriving (some-

[1] By 'triplet' is meant the three—singular, dual and plural—case inflexions. The *first* triplet here refers to *prathamā vibhakti*.

times fancifully) many words, nouns, etc., which would otherwise be regarded as underived and hence 'atomic'. While describing the Sanskrit language (which included both Vedic and classical) in a strictly controlled *sūtra*-style (the style of aphorisms), Pāṇini was supposed to have succinctly raised many philosophical issues that his followers and commentators, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, discussed at some length. These issues were phonetic, etymological, syntactical, semantic, logical, epistemological and metaphysical, and some of them will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

L. Bloomfield has described Pāṇini's grammar as 'one of the greatest monuments of human intelligence' (Bloomfield, 1933, 11). Few have disputed this claim. Besides, some linguists have recognized the significance of Pāṇini's functional analysis of word-forms of Sanskrit for the rise of comparative grammar in the West. Thieme has said that it is on the whole not a description of Sanskrit speech but an *argument* that is meant to show that most of the speech units (*śabda*) are 'built up' from simpler elements in a way that can be captured by formulating 'grammatical rules' (Thieme, 1971, 617). These rules are called *lakṣaṇas*, 'characteristics', and the forms explained thereby are called *lakṣya*, 'that which is to be characterized'. Or, if the rules are called 'definitions', the forms are those that are captured by such 'definitions' (Matilal, 1985, 176–7). The Pāṇinīyas claim that the grammar follows correct usage, i.e. it explains the forms of such correct usage. Pāṇini's grammar is generally regarded as descriptive, not prescriptive. Patañjali's characterization of it as a *śabdānuśāsana*, '(treatise on) instruction for (forming correct) words', has created the impression among modern interpreters (Thieme) that the grammar deals only with word formation, to the exclusion of syntax. But this is not quite correct. For Pāṇini deals with syntactic relations as well as relations among certain kinds of sentences. His *kāraka* system is based upon an implicit sentence analysis (see ch. 5). It is, however, undeniable that he had only limited interest in syntax and semantics.

II. THE PURPOSE OF STUDYING GRAMMAR

Why should anyone study grammar? Why did Pāṇini compose the *śāstra* that we call grammar? It is difficult to answer the second question. We shall use comments of later scholars to formulate an answer. Grammar is regarded as a *śāstra*, 'a system of thought' with a purpose and directed towards a goal, composed for the sake of a well-defined readership. As a *śāstric* discipline it has four *anubandhas* or 'parameters',

or 'delimiting lines': subject, connection, purpose and readership ('owners of entitlement'). The 'subject' of grammar is *śabda*, 'words and sentences', its relation with *śabda* is that it analyses *śabda* into stems and suffixes and thus helps our understanding of its significance. Its purpose is clearly stated in Pāṇini's title of *Aṣṭādhyāyī*: *śabdānuśāsana*: teaching of the principles that would serve to distinguish correct forms from incorrect ones. This is the main or immediate purpose, as Kaiyaṭa has noted. But Patañjali has remarked in the beginning of his 'Great Commentary' that the 'purpose' would be (also) to take care of the following: 'protection' of the scriptural texts in their pristine purity (*rakṣā*), transformation of word-affixes to suit ritual context (*ūha*), recitation of the Scriptures (*āgama*), a simpler way of learning the language (*laghu*) and certainty, a way of learning about the proper meanings when ambiguous words are used (*asaṃdeha*). Of these, the last two might have some significance today, for grammar is certainly a simple and effective way of learning a new language, because we cannot learn a language word by word, and it is true that ambiguities in word-meanings are sometimes dispelled by our knowledge of the grammar (for example, if we know the accent of a compound word we would know how to analyse it into its components and thereby obtain its exact meaning). Patañjali mentions other miscellaneous reasons, but all of them seem to be fanciful from our point of view: for example, that the use of incorrect words generates (religious) demerit just as the use of correct words generates (religious) merit.

It is significant to note that no clear and cogent reasons were given for the study of grammar, except the most obvious ones. (And no cogent reason was given for the study of the grammar of one's first language or mother-tongue.) The discipline nevertheless became important because it became part of the scriptural education, a 'limb' for the study of the *Vedas*. The impetus for the development of the science of linguistics, phonetics and metrics came from the motivation for the pursuit of religious merit. In fact Patañjali says at one point that language is the great 'spirit' (*deva*) that has entered into mortals (mankind) and the study of grammar helps us to get control of this great spirit, that is to become identified with this 'essence' of mankind. According to Patañjali, Pāṇini had composed the *śāstra* of grammar for another 'sociological' reason. He says that in the olden days, immediately after Vedic initiation young students had to study grammar regularly, but in Pāṇini's days the students wanted a 'quick return' for their labour (cf. *tvarita*). They claimed that they could learn the scriptural words from the Scriptures and ordinary words

from ordinary people, and hence the study of grammar was fruitless. The great teacher Pāṇini, having seen this sad state of affairs, out of love and friendship, composed grammar as a *śāstra* to correct the misunderstanding of such misguided students. I believe this requires very little comment from our present-day point of view. Antipathy towards grammar and linguistics is as old as Pāṇini himself!

In the same context Patañjali asks, how should the grammar be written or taught? We cannot separate incorrect word-forms from correct word-forms just by enumerating them one by one. It may be said that since correct words are by far outnumbered by incorrect words (for each correct word, there could be several incorrect forms), we can make a list of correct words (a lexicon?). But even that procedure has been found impracticable. For one can spend one's whole lifetime learning a language through the word-by-word method. The best method is to formulate rules following the principles of 'generalization' (*sāmānya*) and showing 'exceptions' (*viśeṣa*) to such generalities. A general rule will teach a number of word-forms together, and an 'exception' rule will mark those which are different. For example, add the '*a*(*Ṇ*)' affix when the root is connected with an object or accusative: *kumbhakāra* 'maker of pots' (Pāṇini 3.2.1), but add the '(*K*)*a*' affix, under the same conditions, to the roots ending in *ā*: *goda* 'giver of cows'.

Patañjali says that language reveals its own secret to one who studies grammar just as the faithful wife reveals her beautiful body to her husband. And from the sociological point of view, the spread of Sanskrit, the language of the Brahminical culture, might have contributed to strengthening the Brahmin control over society as a whole.

III. LEARNING A LANGUAGE

Does grammar help in learning a language? If learning a language is facilitated by our learning of the meanings of words, then Indian philosophers, from very ancient times, gave an almost unanimous answer to this question. Grammar is one of many ways (they counted eight such ways) of learning the meaning of a word. A couplet is quoted by many writers to identify and explain these eight ways:

śaktigrahaṃ vyākaraṇopamāna-
kośāptavākyād vyavahāratāśca/
vākyasya śeṣād vivṛter vadanti
sānnidhyataḥ siddhapadasya vṛddhāḥ

Quoted by Viśvanātha in *Siddhāntamuktāvali* (*Śabdakhaṇḍa*)

The ancients say that the meaning of a word is learnt from (a) grammar, (b) analogy, (c) a lexicon, (d) the statement of a reliable person, (e) the speech behaviour of elders, (f) the remaining part of the sentence, (g) explanation, and (h) proximity with well-known words.

(a) Grammar: As has been noted already, the meanings of all *yaugika* words, i.e. words normally derived from roots and suffixes and other 'atomic' words, are learnt through grammar, for it supplies the roots (as well as their meanings) and the significance of the suffixes. The list of roots (called *Dhātupāṭha*) is thus thought to be an integral part of Pāṇini's grammar (although it is not known to us today whether the meanings were also supplied with roots in the primitive list, or were added by a later hand).

(b) Analogy: An unknown or unfamiliar object, say a kangaroo, may be made known through a description of it (by someone who is familiar with it) based upon analogy or similarity with some known or familiar object. The word 'kangaroo' may be introduced as meaning 'some animal similar to a huge rabbit'. But we learn the meaning of this word when we have actually seen the animal in question and remember the analogizing description, the resulting form of our knowledge being 'this is called a kangaroo'. Such knowledge of meaning can also be derived from dissimilarity and other descriptive words, provided we remember the older description when we first experience the object. This analogy-based information is regarded as a separate source of knowledge in the Nyāya school of philosophy. It is neither perception, nor inference, nor is it word-generated. The word-generated knowledge supplies the crucial information about similarity, and the later perception coupled with the already gathered information generates the knowledge by which we learn to associate the word 'kangaroo' with its denotation.

(c) Lexicon: This is an obvious source of the knowledge of the meanings of words. Presumably, it supplies what is meant by the primary significative power of the word. Metaphorical meanings are not noted in a lexicon, unless they are already well-known and well-entrenched. When they become well-known in this way, they enjoy the status of alternative lexical meaning.

(d) Statement of a trusted person: Parents point to an object and say 'this is a horse', and their child learns the meaning of the word 'horse'. This is like St Augustine's description in his *Confessions*: 'When they (my elders) named some object and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out.' (*Confessions*, I.8).

(e) Speech-behaviour of elders: This is perhaps the most important one among these eight ways (Nāgeśa, 1925 edn, 64). Prabhākara makes a significant comment in *Bṛhatī*. 'We do not find any other cause (reason, source) to be there, besides the speech-behaviour of the elders.' (Prabhākara, 1932 edn, 258). In Gaṅgeśa we find almost the same view: 'everybody in his or her first learning of the language depends exclusively on the speech-behaviour of the elders.' The process is described as follows.

The older adult of the community commands 'Bring a cow', and the younger adult obeys by bringing a cow. The child as an onlooker understands that the utterance (sounds emitted by the older adult) as a whole means the activity of the younger adult. Then on another occasion from such and other commands as 'Bring a horse and tie the cow', which prompt the younger adult to bring a horse and tie the cow, the (onlooker) child through an unconscious process of assimilation and elimination (*āvāpodvāpa*), learns the meanings of such words as 'cow', 'horse', 'bring' and 'tie'. The process involves not only both perception and inference, but also something else. The child must understand that the adults' intention is shown by their bodily movements and that the command of the older adult causes activity in the younger adult who is commanded to act, and that a sort of communication takes place between them. The method parallels here the usual behaviouristic explanation of our language learning mechanism.

(f) Larger context of the sentence or the passage: The special or the specific meaning of a word (which may be ambiguous in its use) may be learnt from our knowledge of the larger context. The word *yava* means (1) long-bearded barley (in the Ārya's vocabulary) or (2) another kind of seed (in the Mleccha's vocabulary). So when it is said 'the porridge is prepared from *yava*', we may ascertain its exact meaning from the next sentence: 'when other plants droop down, these (*yavas*) stand up and flourish'. Contextual factors undoubtedly constitute the main source for resolving ambiguities in meaning.

(g) Explanation or Commentary: Words of doubtful meaning are usually explained (by a *definition* in a commentary) by the knowledgeable person. This parallels word-meanings supplied by definition. Such a definition may specify the meaning in such a way as would fit the context.

(h) Syntactic connection with words whose meanings are already

known: This is a common way of determining the meaning of an unfamiliar word occurring in a sentence. 'The *pika* sings sweetly sitting on this mango tree.' Here the meaning of the unfamiliar word *pika* can be inferred from its syntactical connection with other known words. This may be taken to be a special case of contextuality, but attention is drawn particularly to syntactical consideration. In the case under consideration, presumably a cuckoo will be singing, and *pika* will mean 'cuckoo'.

IV. SYNONYMS AND HOMONYMS

Many words may denote the same meaning and the same word may have many meanings. This is an invariable feature of any natural language. Patañjali noted this feature under Pāṇini 1.3.1. Synonyms were not thought to present philosophical worries, for they were regarded as simply co-referential words emphasizing different aspects of the identical referent. In fact true synonyms were rare, for shades of meaning were distinguished, the exact meaning of each word being regarded as the function of the root-meanings and the significance of the suffixes and prefixes.

Words with multiple meaning were thought to be in need of philosophical explanation. There were two different theories in terms of which such explanation was furnished. Bhartṛhari calls one the 'multiple-word theory' and the other 'single-word theory'. According to the former, we should consider one such word with multiple meaning as a dummy for many words, each of which has its own singular meaning. According to the latter, it is considered to be a single word with multiple meaning. In fact both views are prevalent among linguists. In some cases, however, it is clearly recognizable (on the basis of etymological history) that the same sound form (*rūpa*) represents actually two or more words having two or more meanings. This will support the former view, and the resulting ambiguity is resolved easily, as Bhartṛhari emphasizes, by the contextual factors (*prakaraṇa*). But this raises, among other things, two problems. First, there are certain roots such as *pā*. This means (twice noted in the *Dhātupāṭha*) both 'to drink' and 'to protect'; it is the same sound-form having two completely different meanings and this cannot be explained through etymology or derivation. Should this not be regarded as just two roots which happen to have the same sound-form, *pā*? Second, many words seem to have some primary mean-

ings and then several secondary or related meanings. They are usually explained with recourse to metaphor. Indian theorists, being mainly concerned with the synchronic study of language, explained that the non-primary senses of the word are developed out of usage but they are always connected, in some way or other, with the primary meaning. Sometimes, however, some non-primary meaning, it is conceded, may gain prominence through constant usage and then be regarded as another 'primary' meaning. Lexicons give ample evidence of such acquired meanings. Shifts of meaning constitute a common feature of any natural language.

The Mīmāṃsā philosophers were 'purist' about language and argued that 'monosemy' was natural and normal in the language system and the phenomenon of synonyms and multiple meaning was to be explained as corruptions from the original state of affairs. Kumārilabhaṭṭa gives the following rather simple argument in *Tantravārttika*. Since names are understood to be used for referring to objects, it is fruitless to have a second (or a third) word if only one (the first) can serve the purpose. This springs from the Mīmāṃsā view of language, according to which the word-object connection is 'natural', i.e. non-derived, and constant. The origin of synonymous words is to be explained in many cases, according to Kumārila, through 'historical' analysis, that is, gradual acceptance of the 'corrupt' forms of words (from the *apabhraṃśa* dialect?) as regular Sanskrit words. But certain cases of genuine synonyms may be accepted where no other explanation is available (cf. *ananyagatikatvena*). Regarding the problem of multiple meaning, the Mīmāṃsakas argue against the theory of metaphorical or non-primary meanings. For them all the different meanings are to be regarded as primary. The old view (Patañjali's?) that frequency of uses determines the primary meaning (the less frequent meanings are non-primary) is criticized and rejected by the Mīmāṃsakas. Again, the theory of 'corruption' is used to explain the origin of multiple meaning. The Mlecchas use a particular word-form to denote a different object, and gradual acceptance of such word-forms in Sanskrit vocabulary creates the homonym, the same word having multiple meaning.

Further problems arise when we have to explain such frequent rhetorical devices as the figure of speech called *śleṣa* (paranomasia or pun). The rhetoricians sometimes argue that two or more meanings can be derived from the same word-form (sound-form) provided we take the form as representing two or more words, each giving its

own meaning. This however supports the early 'multiple word' theory. In fact, the richness of linguistic devices to convey meanings is too great; these theories cannot exhaustively explain them. Theories are selective and within limits they can give some explanatory account for certain phenomena. It is too ambitious to expect a wholesale resolution of all problems.

3

WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS

I. CLASSIFICATION OF WORDS

Yāska divides words or 'parts of speech' (in his terminology *pada*) into four groups: *nāma* 'nouns' or 'substantives', *ākhyāta* 'verbs', *upasarga* 'pre-verbs' or 'prefixes' and *nipāta* 'particles', 'invariant words' or 'prepositions(?)'. This fourfold division was, as Brough (1953) rightly conjectures, a legacy of the analysis of the *saṃhitā* or 'connected text' as uttered in the recitation of the Ṛg-vedic hymns, into its constituent words called the *padā* text, i.e. the forms in which they appear in isolation. This breaking down of sentence into words generated a philosophical controversy. In the *Prātiśākhya* text, the gist of the controversy was put cryptically as *saṃhitā pada-prakṛtiḥ*. According to one analysis of the compound word here, *'pada-prakṛtiḥ'*, the words would be the primary elements (*prakṛti*) out of which the sentence is constructed, while according to another analysis it means the opposite, that is, the sentence would be the primary entity, originally given, and the words are arrived at only through analysis and abstraction. To call something 'primary' in this context meant that it had a preferred ontological status. What was called secondary would have a derived status, as either a constructed conglomerate or an abstracted constituent. The controversy over the relative primacy of the word and the sentence was long and protracted, and, one should add, tenuous in a way that would have been unknown to Yāska in his time (see ch. 10).

II. CATEGORIES OF THINGS

The fourfold division of words was not directly connected with the ontological division of entities. But since Yāska was also concerned with the referents of words, this had implication for the ontological categories. The rather intriguing Indian (Sanskrit) term for what are

generally called (ontological) categories, is *padārtha*, literally meaning 'what the word refers to' or 'referents'. Classification of words from the point of view of what they stand for would automatically have relevance to ontology and semantics. This becomes clear from Patañjali onwards. Yāska's contribution however lay in singling out two main (ontological) categories, a process or an action and an entity or a being or a thing. L. Sarup chose to contrast these two, *bhāva* and *sattva*, by using the familiar terminology of 'becoming' and 'being' (Sarup, 1921, 5). Recently E. Kahrs has questioned these translations and suggested 'being' for *bhāva* and 'entity' for *sattva* (Kahrs, 1986, 117–18). I am not sure whether translation of *bhāva* as 'being' is totally helpful. Of course, in Buddhist Sanskrit, e.g. Nāgārjuna's writings, *bhāva* may mean 'being' or even 'a thing'. But here this would be misleading. We need a contrast when we select a pair of English words, as Yāska originally intended when he chose the pair of Sanskrit words *bhāva* and *sattva*. Yāska first defined the notion of *ākhyāta*, verb, and then the notion of *nāma*, noun, by reversing the order of his own enumeration. It may be that he was implicitly influenced by the philosophical view of the grammarians that the verb constitutes the centrepiece of any sentence. The verb is defined as that which has *bhāva* ('process') as its predominant notion and a noun is defined as that which has *sattva* ('thing'), as its predominant notion. Although I am somewhat persuaded by the argument of Kahrs, I wish to suggest that the 'thing–process' duality might capture the contrasting function of the pair '*sattva–bhāva*'. The 'process' is one that has, according to one interpretation, an early stage and a later stage and when such a 'process' is the dominant sense, a finite verb is used, as in *vrajati*, 'walks', or *pacati*, 'cooks'. But when a process is referred to as a 'petrified' or 'configured' mass (*mūrta*) extending from start to finish, a *verbal* noun is used, e.g. *vrajyā*, (a) walk, or *pakti*, (a) cooking. In the latter case the notion of process is subordinated, for the element of sequence in the process is lacking. Hence we have a noun derived from a verb to express it.

There might have been a profound insight in Yāska's writing when he used the demonstrative pronoun 'that' and said that a substantive or a 'thing' is referred to by the pronoun 'that'. Whatever we can point out by saying 'that', such as a cow, an elephant or a horse, would be the referent of a noun-word. Even an abstract idea or an action can be referred to by a noun-word (as has been noted already) because we can also refer to it by 'that'. This may be the beginning of the idea that

'things', whatever they are, can be referred to by the use of a noun and that the pronoun 'that' is a dummy for any noun. Yāska's intuition was right. Perhaps it was reinterpreted by Helārāja in his commentary on the *Vākyapadīya* when he was talking about the definition of a *dravya*, which in the absence of a better term I shall call 'substance'. The idea of a 'thing' or a 'substance' necessarily carries with it the idea of 'existence' or 'reality' or 'substantiality'. We can support it from our direct experience of the objects in the physical world. I shall come back to this problem.

The pre-verbs or prefixes were never considered to be independently meaningful. Their significance lies in the contribution they make to the meaning of the main verb to which they are attached. Sometimes they modify, sometimes they reverse the meaning of the main verb. A well-known (later) verse states that the pre-verbs by force change and modify the meaning of the verbs just as the ocean-water contaminates the sweetness of the water of the river Gaṅgā. For example, the root-verb *hṛ* means 'to steal', but with *pra-* it means 'to strike', with *ā-* it means 'to eat', and with *pari-* 'to abandon'. Some have propounded the theory that the pre-verbs are not to be regarded as 'denotative' of any meaning, but only 'indicative' of some meaning that is actually located in the verbs, and to round up the view, they would say that a verbal root does not have any *fixed* meaning. In fact such roots implicitly possess the power to have many meanings, and a particular pre-verb's function is to bring about some such meaning as is already implicitly present in the verb. On this view, the pre-verbs would be only functional, lacking any denotation. A pre-verb is like a lamp that would focus upon a particular meaning among other meanings or a set of meanings lying within the domain of the verbal root. However, there are those who would oppose this view.

Nipāta constitutes a very heterogeneous group of words. According to Yāska (standard interpretation), they do not have any fixed meaning but each has a variety of meanings and the contextual factors etc. determine which meaning it has. In Pāṇini's grammar they have been defined by a list beginning with *ca* = 'and' (rule 1.4.57), as well as described as signifying 'non-things' (*a-sattva*). In fact in Pāṇini, *nipāta* forms a much broader category of invariant words. The class of pre-verbs forms a sub-class of this broader class. Another sub-class is formed by the group of pre-verbs that are called *karma-pravacanīya*. These words, mostly pre-verbs, stand alone in a sentence, i.e. without being added to any verbs. They signify various meanings, in fact

meanings that are assignable to some verb or other. I say 'signify' here, for the original theory was that the pre-verbs do not have denotative power, and the same point of view is maintained in the case of *karma-pravacanīya*. They should be said to 'indicate' meanings, but meanings of what? The answer lies in the derivative meaning of the technical term itself. Here *karma* means 'verb'. Hence a *karma-pravacanīya* is actually a dummy for a full-fledged pre-verb plus a verb in combination. Such verbs were mainly 'relational' verbs, and a *karma-pravacanīya* in this way is said to specify or qualify the relation expressed by the absent verb. In the sentence 'He was granted a boon *after* prayers' the Sanskrit word *anu* would be used for 'after' and it would not simply indicate the temporal relation of posterity between prayers and granting a boon, but would specifically signify 'after having heard (the prayer)'. The verb 'hear' was understood. Similarly in 'Lightning flashes *at* the tree' the Sanskrit *anu*, used for 'at', would signify not simply the particular direction but rather 'aiming towards or at' (the verb 'aiming' being understood).

III. PRIMARY AND NON-PRIMARY MEANINGS OF A WORD: METAPHOR

While discussing the 'multiple meaning' problem, we have seen that a word having multiple meaning may be said to have one primary meaning (as a lexicographer would note) and perhaps several secondary or *derived* meanings. The expressive power of any natural language is thus enhanced. This is to be distinguished from the cases of homonyms which generate systematic ambiguity to be resolved by contextual factors (see below). We may limit the terms 'words with multiple meaning' (or homonyms) to those in which each of the two or several meanings would be considered primary. But it is a common phenomenon of a natural language, where any word, apart from having one or several *primary* meanings, could be used to convey meanings (or denote objects) which, though distinct from the ordinary (primary) meaning, are nevertheless connected in some way or other with the same primary meaning. This phenomenon is usually captured by the rhetoricians' term, metaphor or metaphorical use. This may also be called the metaphorical extension of the meaning of a word. In fact this phenomenon is so pervasive in our language that sometimes we wonder whether there is any sense in our assuming that there are at all any fixed primary meanings of the words we use, and it may be that the meaning of a word is to be found or determined simply by its

use. Our general tendency is however to isolate and learn the words as having certain fixed primary meanings (determined possibly by their frequency of occurrence) and then explain the additional meanings or senses that the user of a word may convey, as metaphorical extensions.

Indian philosophers (espcially of the Nyāya school) give an account of this phenomenon by identifying two different 'powers' in a word: one is that of *saying* (*abhidhāna*) and the other is that of *pointing, signifying* or *indicating* (*lakṣaṇa*). The first is called the primary meaning-giving power while the second is called the secondary or indicatory meaning-giving power. By the first, the word *speaks*, as it were, while by the second it only *indicates*, and a metaphor is born.

Consider the example: 'The village is on the (river) Gaṅgā' (=*Gaṅgāyāṃ ghoṣaḥ*). The primary meaning of the word 'Gaṅgā' is the river we call Gaṅgā, but the sentence which locates the (fisherman's) village on the river Gaṅgā would be speaking about an impossible state of affairs if only the primary meaning of 'Gaṅgā' is taken into account. Common rationality demands that we construe the meaning differently in order to make sense of the sentence uttered. By metaphorical extension—a practice pervasively prevalent among the speakers (of Sanskrit in this case, but generally, of any language)—the meaning of the word 'Gaṅgā' is given (by its *indicatory* power) as 'the banks of the Gaṅgā' and hence the sentence is taken to be describing the situation, that the village is on the banks of the Gaṅgā—a perfectly legitimate conclusion about what the sentence means or how the hearer is supposed to cognize its meaning in the context.

On analysis, the Naiyāyikas identify two necessary conditions: (a) the primary meaning should be a 'misfit' in the context; it would not *go with* the meanings of other words in the sentence, and (b) the *indicated* meaning (presumably intended by the speaker) would have to be associated with the primary meaning in some way or other. It is to be noted that there are some established ways (conventions) in the language community by which this metaphorical extension is achieved, and it is not always necessary that the intention of the particular speaker be taken into account. In fact, the hearer does not 'enter' into the *mind* of the speaker, but the context and the other circumstances would make the *intended* meaning 'visible' to him. This process is automatic and hence such meaning seems to come naturally to the hearer. Rhetoricians note such well-known devices as part for the whole, the container for the content, genus for species,

species for genus and so on. In 'Protect the food from ravens' the word 'ravens' means not only ravens but also by extension any birds or beasts that would spoil the food. This is a common presupposition of our general rational behaviour. For the person receiving the command would obviously try to protect the food from being spoiled by any bird or animal. It is the context which derives this metaphorical meaning from the word 'ravens' here, and I believe no lexicographer would dream of noting this as presumably another normal meaning of the word 'raven'.

Rhetoricians and literary critics sometimes argue that there is, besides the primary (denotative) power and the indicatory power, a third power of the word, the suggestive power, which is sometimes relevant in poetry and rhetorical speech. A word can thus have a suggested meaning, which is not covered by the scope of its primary or indicatory meaning. High class poetry, says Ānandavardhana, is that where the suggested meaning of the word excels, that is, it is more beautiful and more charming than the ordinary meaning (which may be either the lexical meaning or, to suit the context, the indicatory or transferred meaning). It should be noted that the need for the metaphorical or indicatory or transferred meaning (= *lakṣyārtha*) arises when, and only when, the primary or normal or lexical meaning does not fit the context. But the suggested meaning is appealed to only after the (*literal*) sentence-meaning has been fully comprehended with the help of both normal and metaphorical meaning. This has appeal only to the appropriate hearer: in poetry it appeals only to the *sensitive* reader. Ānandavardhana has called it 'reverberation' of the sense from the sound, i.e. speech. When the hearer has apprehended that the village is on the banks of the Gaṅgā from the utterance of the sentence *Gaṅgāyāṃ ghoṣaḥ* (see App. III, section I) he may further comprehend that the speaker here intends to emphasize by this metaphor the natural beauty and simplicity of the place, the village (and hence its excessive proximity to the river has been underlined).

IV. CRITICISM OF THE 'SUGGESTIVE' POWER

The literary critic's claim for a third power of the word has not gone unchallenged. Words may be suggestive because people are suggestible. But it may become a very subjective factor as each hearer might have the propensity to be suggestible in different ways. Hence an account of this power of suggestion can be given in terms of inference

(by the hearer), without attributing a separate 'power' or dispositionality to the word itself. In poetry or literature there may be well-entrenched and well-practised ways of suggesting beauty, charm, and aesthetic rapture through the use of particular words and devices. This however can hardly be a proof for the existence of an ontological property in words called 'the suggestive power'. (Literary critic Mahimabhaṭṭa criticized Ānandavardhana on this issue.) The power to *denote* or *mean* (the primary meaning) as well as to *indicate* or *signify* (the metaphorical or non-primary meaning) is however a different kettle of fish. Both are, let us say, designatory powers, without which the meaning of a sentence would not be comprehended. It has already been noted that sometimes the old metaphorical meaning can be so well-entrenched as to gain currency as the lexical meaning. (To resolve the translational problems we may, I suggest, decide to use 'denoting', 'signifying' and 'suggesting' for the three powers: *abhidhā*, *lakṣaṇā*, and *vyañjanā*.)

The suggestive meaning is hearer-relative. An example is often cited to make this point. Consider the utterance: 'the sun has set.' It will suggest at least three different meanings to three different hearers: a thief will understand that the time to go out to steal has come; a paramour will understand that the time to meet his beloved is near; and a priest will understand that it is time to say his prayers. In poetry, such suggestive meanings are dependent upon each sensitive reader.

V. THE SPEAKER'S INTENTION

A fourth concept is sometimes talked about in this context. It is called *tātparya* or the intention of the speaker. While it is clearly seen by many philosophers that the intention of the speaker must play a very important role in the determination of the meanings of words and sentences used, it is redundant to think of it as a separate meaning-giving power of the word. From 'Bring *saindhava*', the hearer comprehends that the speaker intends to have some salt brought to him for he is having his dinner at the moment. We may say that the context (here the situation of utterance) helps us to infer or guess the *intended* meaning of '*saindhava*'. This means that an awareness of the speaker's intention (acquired through guessing) is a condition for cognizing (knowing) the sentence-meaning by resolving the ambiguity in the word *saindhava* (which can mean either salt or a horse).

VI. AMBIGUITY AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

It is well-known that most words are ambiguous in a natural language and contextual factors more often than not determine for us the exact meaning of a word or expression in a given case. In recognition of this point, some philosophers of India prepared a list of such relevant factors and illustrated how the meaning is determined. We may follow Bhartṛhari to give an account of how the meanings of ambiguous and equivocal expressions are rendered precise by these contextual factors. Bhartṛhari's list was adopted by and large by the later philosophers when they talked about the problems of ambiguous expressions.

(a) Association: The word *Hari* is used to mean various things. It is a name for Viṣṇu, or it may mean a monkey or some other creatures. But the phrase 'Hari with a conch and a discus' would be rendered unambiguous for it would refer to Viṣṇu because of its *association* with the conch and the discus.

(b) Dissociation: The word *dhenu* may mean either a cow or a mare. But the expression 'A *dhenu* without its calf' will be unambiguous, for the accompanying words imply a *dissociation* which tells us that we are obviously talking about a cow which is now without its calf.

(c) Mutual association: The name 'Rāma' in 'Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa' must refer to the brother of Lakṣmaṇa and not to Balarāma, the brother of Kṛṣṇa (also called Rāma for the sake of brevity). In general, this can also be called association (or dissociation) but the Sanskrit compounds are its typical examples. Here we may note that words denoting *association* or *dissociation* ('with' or 'without') are not used (as in the previous two cases).

(d) Hostility or opposition: *Chāyā* may mean 'beauty' or 'shade', but in the compound '*chāyā*-and-light' it obviously means 'shade'. All these four conditions can be called the general determination of meaning through association (a psychological factor).

(e) Purpose: *Sthānu* may mean a pillar or Lord Śiva. In 'Worship Sthānu' the purpose is obviously served by the latter meaning.

(f) Context or Situation: 'Bring *saindhava*' said at the time of eating a meal will mean that the speaker wants salt, not a horse.

(g) Indicatory sign: Some sign may be present in the larger context (within a passage), and this may help to resolve the ambiguity in, e.g., 'The *wet* pebbles are placed on the altar.' The pebbles may be

soaked in any liquid, but since the context mentions clarified butter, we have to understand that it is an *indicatory sign* that the pebbles are first to be soaked (made wet) in clarified butter, and then placed on the altar.

(h) Proximity with another word: This is also association. But perhaps physical proximity is meant, as well as syntactic connection. 'Lord, the destroyer of cities' would refer to Lord Siva here, although any king can be called 'the destroyer of cities', i.e. enemy-cities.

(i) Capacity: 'I am intoxicated with *madhu*', here *madhu* would mean wine, not the spring season.

(j) Propriety: Another variation to (i). In a poetic context, it may be proper to say 'I am intoxicated with the (advent of the) spring season'.

(k) Place: In 'There stands the master', 'the master' will refer to the king or the human master, not God.

(l) Time: In '*Citrabhānu* shines', the subject will mean the sun if the sentence is spoken at daytime, and fire or light if it is spoken at night.

(m) Gender, and (n) Accent: Sometimes grammatical devices such as gender and accent resolve ambiguity. The word *mitra* in masculine gender means the sun, in neuter gender it means a friend. The compound word *Indra-śatru* with its last syllable accented means 'killer of Indra', but with its first syllable accented it means 'one whose killer is Indra'.

The above list is not exhaustive, nor is it mutually exclusive, for some of the factors obviously overlap. They can broadly be classified under contextual and grammatical factors (the last two above being obviously grammatical). The contextual may be subdivided under verbal and non-verbal or situational. Besides, in most cases, the psychological factor, association, plays a crucial role.

VII. THE WORD-OBJECT RELATION: IS IT CONVENTIONAL OR ETERNAL?

Vaiśeṣika-sūtra 7.2.24 says that the relation between word and meaning is a matter of convention (*samaya*). This is the general view of the Nyāya as well as the Vaiśeṣika. This is held in opposition to the other view generally maintained by the grammarians and the Mīmāṃsakas. Patañjali in the beginning of his *Mahābhāṣya* raises the question of whether the word is permanent or not. He then goes on to say that in the book called *Saṃgraha* (lost to us, ascribed to Vyādi, see Kaiyaṭa's

commentary, *Pradīpa*), this topic has been elaborately examined. The general solution is that although the word is eternal, that is, permanent, sometimes we have to treat it as non-eternal, as being produced by the vocal organ. This was the solution in *Saṃgraha*. Then Patañjali raises a more relevant question in order to introduce Kātyāyana's *vārttika*, which states that the relation between word and meaning is eternal (*siddha*, given to us, not created by us).

It is usual to think of either a general property, a universal or a particular, a thing, as the meaning of the word. Hence Patañjali says: if the word-meaning relationship is eternal, then the meaning has to be eternal also, and therefore we can see that it is the universal (an eternal entity) which must be the meaning of the word. Things, as we know, are non-eternal. However, this view, or this solution, is not tenable. For, Patañjali continues, even the thing, the substance, can be regarded as permanent while the 'form' of it may undergo change. (The word *ākṛti* is ambiguous, it can mean the universal or the 'form' of an object.) From a lump of gold, one can make different ornaments by changing the form or the shape, but the substance, gold, remains undestroyed, hence it is 'permanent'.

Patañjali's next question is more significant. How do we know that the word-meaning relationship is eternal or non-derived, i.e. not created or conventional? The answer is: we learn it from the behaviour of people. How? People are seen to be using words to convey meanings, but they do not make an effort to manufacture words. A pot, for example, is non-eternal, a product, and hence in order that we may use it, we go to the potter and ask him to manufacture a pot for our use. The same is *not* true of words. We do not usually approach grammarians and ask them to manufacture words for our use.

Jaimini in his *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.5 says that the relation between word and meaning is 'non-derived' or 'uncreated' (*autpattika*). Both Jaimini and Kātyāyana (see above) used two rather difficult words, *autpattika* and *siddha*, which do not have any transparent sense. Both are however explained by their respective commentators, Śabara and Patañjali, in the sense of eternality or permanence. Śabara states clearly that *autpattika* means 'not created by human convention' (cf. *apauruṣeya*).

Śabara sets up the position of his opponent as follows. The word being a mere collection of letters, is located in our speech and the object it refers to is located on the floor (a pot, for example). We

recognize and thereby identify the word 'pot' as soon as it is uttered, but we recognize the pot when we see it on the floor. The two are distinct realities, and whenever two distinct realities are connected (brought together), the connection is seen to be man-made, not 'natural', nor eternal—for example, our tying a pot to another pot with a rope. If the said connection were admitted to be a variety of such physical contact, then utterance of the word 'sweet' would sweeten the tongue and that of 'knife' would cut it! The connection cannot also be one of cause-and-effect, nor one of locus-and-locatee. We have to settle for such semantic connection as exists between the object of cognition and the causal factor of that cognition (cf. *pratyāyya-pratyāyaka*). Let us call it Connection C.

Now the question arises, *à la* Śabara, if there is C between a word and its object, why is it that the word does not cause the cognition of the object when it is heard for the first time by the hearer (who has not learnt the language)? If C is uncreated and eternal, then the first utterance would generate a cognition of its object in such a hearer. If it is man-made and conventionally acquired, then such cognition would depend upon the hearer's learning of that convention.

Śabara, however, answers this question through an ingenious device. We cannot see a pot in darkness even when there is the required contact between the eye and the object, for we need the presence of light. Similarly, we need to learn a language by watching the linguistic and other behaviour of other older members of the community, so that the word being heard can generate cognition of the object.

Certain other arguments are given by Jaimini and Śabara in support of the non-derived nature of C.

(a) It is pointed out that it is the *form* (*ākṛti*) of the material items, such as a pot or a table (which are destructible), that is meant by the word 'pot' or 'table', not the individual destructible items. Thus, the 'form' is the proper 'object' (= *artha* = meaning) of the word. Hence the non-created nature of such a word-object relation can be easily vindicated.

(b) We cannot find, nor can we remember (nor can we know from any other source), the person or persons who created the convention for C. For example, we learn from our traditional sources of knowledge that Pāṇini created the connection C between the word *vṛddhi* and the letters *ā*, *ai*, *au*, for the sake of his grammar, and Piṅgala, writing a book on metrics, created a connection C between the letter *m* and the set of three long vowels. These are technical terms, one is

to be found in Pāṇini's grammar and the other in Piṅgala's metrics, and in both cases we know their originators. However, for the majority of language words no such originator can be discovered. Hence the connection C cannot be conventional. It is natural and uncreated.

(c) Further, when a child learns a language from her parent or teacher, to recognize the connection between the word and its object she must implicitly know, also, the connection. Otherwise she would not learn anything. In other words, the teaching of language supposes connection C, which proves the uncreatedness, i.e. non-conventionality of connection C.

Śabara explains as follows:

> There cannot be any period in time when not a single word was connected by C to any of its objects. Why? For in that case, the act of connecting cannot take place. To make the required connection, one must use some word which already has such a connection. What created the second connection? If it is by another such word, what created the third or the fourth connection? This will lead to infinite regress. Therefore, even when we admit that some connections are created, we must admit that there are words which are well entrenched in our usage, and for which the connection C is uncreated.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school opposes the Mīmāṃsā school, and argues that the word-object connection is created by a convention. Just as Pāṇini has created a convention for his grammar, in which the word *vṛddhi* denotes the three vowels, *ā*, *ai*, *au*, similarly, in ordinary language, a convention is created by the first user of the language in the following manner: 'from the word *X*, the object *Y* should be cognized', 'let the word *X* designate the object *Y*'. This usually takes the form of a will on the part of the first user of the language. Language learning involves learning this convention. Here, of course, the tricky question is: Who was the first user of the language? It is not improbable to conceive that at different periods in the history of the development of a language, there was a consensus regarding the use of certain words to denote certain objects and convey certain meanings. The community usually remembers the conventions, but not the originators of such conventions. In a few cases only do we remember the originators such as Pāṇini and Piṅgala. However, some Naiyāyikas resort to the theory of the origin of language from God, the creator. According to this view, in the beginning of creation, God created the

convention and taught men the use of language. This theory has Biblical overtones.

It seems that both theories contain some grains of truth. If we believe in conventionalism, then, in an extreme interpretation, language becomes entirely dependent on the whims of the language user. In that case, we may end up with a 'Humpty Dumpty-ish' theory of meaning. The introduction of God as the first creator of convention was meant to avoid such absurd consequences. The Eternalist has also made one important point regarding the givenness of the language and the word-object connection. Within a given linguistic community, the connection C cannot be easily tampered with. The debate between the Eternalist and the Conventionalist may well reveal the point that there is some justification for accepting a theory like the *sphoṭa* theory of language, according to which the word and its linguistic meaning both remain undistinguished in the mind of the competent speaker as well as the competent hearer.

4

NAMES AND THINGS: UNIVERSALS

I

Kātyāyana, writing complementary rules as well as succinct commentary on Pāṇini's Grammar, expressed a view in his aphoristic style, which became the centre of controversy between Bhartṛhari and Diṅnāga in the later period. The aphorism under Pāṇini-*sūtra* 5.1.119 states that the abstraction suffixes such as *-tā* and *-tva* (added to nominal stems) 'express' (*abhi* + *dhā*) only those qualities (*guṇa*) on the basis of which the nominal stems (words) are used to refer to things. This rather ambiguous statement can be understood as an attempt to indicate what 'meanings' we should assign to the abstract nominal stems ending in *-tā* or *-tva*. (According to Pānini's grammar: a nominal stem + *tā* or *tva* = another (abstract) nominal stem, e.g. *ghaṭa* + *tva* = *ghaṭatva* 'pot-hood'.) Besides, we can say that here is an attempt also to answer the philosophically interesting question: What is the 'basis' (*nimitta*) on which things are named? The term *pravṛtti-nimitta* is frequently used in such questions—'What is the *pravṛtti-nimitta* of the term *X*?' which is the usual rephrasing of the question 'What is *X*?'. Literally it means 'the basis for the application (of a term or a word)'. We can variously formulate the related questions: Is the name given to a thing on the basis of a quality or an attribute? Do we call a thing or a set of things by one name or another by virtue of our recognition of some feature? Further we may ask: Is this feature locatable in the thing itself? Or, is it a pattern of our perception or awareness of the thing?

The word 'quality' (*guṇa*) was left ambiguous in Kātyāyana's formulation. It can be a simple attribute or a universal (*jāti*). A broader concept of 'quality' refers to not only qualities but also both simple actions and (objective or subjective or linguistic) universals (Matilal,

1971, 101–6). Kaiyaṭa in his commentary, *Pradīpa*, explicitly states that the meaning of the word 'quality' includes both universals and actions. Although Kātyāyana upheld a theory to explain how things (*dravyas*) get their names, i.e. on the basis of some quality or other, it is not clear whether this quality is simply a feature recognizable in the thing, or an abstract attribute we separate (somewhat artificially) in thought, or an objective universal characterizing the thing. Thus a thing would be called 'blue' because of the presence of blue colour in it, 'a pot' because of its being characterized by pot-universal. On the whole the theory can be understood as saying that names are given to spatio-temporal things on the basis of a quality which belongs to them.

II

In the Nyāya system an allied question was raised and answered. What does Word mean or convey? What is the 'meaning' (*artha*) of a word? *Nyāyasūtra* 2.2.66 stated that a word conveys three 'meanings': the thing or the individual (*vyakti*), the 'form' of the thing (*ākṛti*), and the universal (*jāti*). Thus, the word 'cow' refers to the cow-individual, and it also can be applied to what has the 'form' or 'image' of a cow, for example, 'the golden cow'. Besides, the universal cowhood is also meant by the word 'cow' on many occasions. Thus, while on Kātyāyana's view a cow is called 'a cow' on the basis of cowhood being present there, on the early Nyāya view both an individual cow and cowhood ('universal') would be meant by the word 'cow' itself. The word 'form' (*ākṛti*) was rather enigmatic in the *Nyāyasūtra*. It might have meant the 'configuration' of the animal cow, that by which we may recognize a cow. Nāgeśa quotes this *Nyāyasūtra* in support of his view about the meaning of the word and explains the three terms as follows: *jāti* 'universal' is not simply the universal essence but includes any *basis* for the application of the term in question. The word *ākṛti* ('form') stands for the visible mark (*liṅga*) of the universal in question, i.e., the particular configuration of the object (the embodied object) characterized by appearance, colour, actions, etc. Thus it is that following the command 'Draw a cow' we can understand that the speaker asks us to draw a picture of a cow (for otherwise neither the cow nor the universal cowhood, the purported meaning, of the word 'cow' could be construed as the object of the commanded action, drawing). Nāgeśa thinks that in this way the early Nyāya view of the composite meaning of the word was accept-

able also to the early grammarians like Patañjali who closely followed Kātyāyana. Some Navya-Naiyāyikas maintain that the word 'cow' refers to the individual *as qualified by* the universal, cowhood. Hence the word *ākṛti* in *Nyāyasūtra* 2.2.66, means *vaiśiṣṭiya* or 'qualification'. But I shall not go into this new interpretation in the present context.

III

In the beginning of his *Vaiyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya* Patañjali raises the philosophical question: What, in fact, is the word *gauḥ* ('cow')? He then observes that it is neither the universal cowhood, nor the individual cow, nor its qualities, nor its actions. He replies that the word 'cow' is 'that by the utterance of which there is comprehension of the object having the dewlap, the tail, hump, the hoofs, and the horns (all taken together).' Nāgeśa argues that here Patañjali is accepting the view that in the cognition marked by the word 'cow' a number of objects (meanings) are comprehended. The objects include the word 'cow' itself as well as the individual cow, cowhood, and certain qualities and activities of the cow. But the word 'cow' must not be conflated with other items in the cognition. With this idea in mind, Patañjali (according to Nāgeśa) raises the question 'what is the word "cow"?' and then tries to separate it from other items. The question 'what is a word' is not easy to answer. It may lead to the discussion of *sphoṭa* (ch. 7; see also section V of this chapter).

It is however not clear whether Patañjali explicitly accepts the early Nyāya view of the threefold meaning of a word (individual, configuration and universal). On the other hand, he mentions four classes of words based upon the distinction of their 'occasioning ground or basis' (*nimitta*): they are class-names, quality-names, action-names and arbitrary names or proper names (*Bhāṣya* under *Śivasūtra* 2 in Pāṇini). This classification has been referred to by later writers who give the following example to illustrate the classification: 'A moving white cow (called) Ḍittha' (*gauḥ śuklaś calo Ḍitthaḥ*). Here the four words refer to the same object, the cow in question, but the *basis* for each of these words being applied to or used to refer to the same thing could be demonstrably different in each case. The said classification depends upon the difference of such bases or grounds. First, the word 'cow' is called a class-name, since the basis of its use is a purported class-property or universal. The word 'white' is called a quality-name because the basis for its use is a quality, a colour in this

case. Similarly, the word 'moving' is called an action-name, for the basis of its use is an action, a particular movement in the cow. The word 'Ḍittha' is a proper name; the basis for its use is not non-existent but arbitrary (*yadṛcchā*). Its use is connected somehow with the wishes or whims of the speaker. An argument is given to show that all the four 'bases' for the use of words must be semantically relevant, for otherwise the above description would be regarded as tautology. But the very fact that the said description is found informative and felt as non-tautologous shows that the usage of words is guided by a consideration of their bases for such usage. The argument here is partly anticipatory of Frege's well-known argument for distinguishing between the senses and references of such expressions as 'the Evening Star' and 'the Morning Star'. But we need not put much emphasis on such similarity, for several other remarks of Frege about his notion of sense preclude the possibility of the 'basis for usage' being considered as something like Fregean sense. All that the Indian view may imply is that when a word is *fixed* upon an object in order to be used to designate it, it is done through the mediation of a basis or a ground. In the case of the proper name the ground is variable being dependent upon the whims of the name-giver.

IV

The Mīmāṃsakas reject the Nyāya view of the threefold meaning of the word and argue that word-meanings must be only universals, neither individuals nor configurations. To understand the early Mīmāṃsā argument for this view we have to understand another point of the Mīmāṃsā theory of language. According to the Mīmāṃsakas, words or bits of language are eternal or permanent entities. In fact, they say that there are two types of sound or *śabda*, one in the form of noise, the other in the form of letters (*varṇa*) that constitute words and sentences. Noises obviously are momentary in nature, but the letters (*varṇa*) are eternal, ubiquitous and independent entities. The noises produced by the vocal organs manifest these ubiquitous and eternally existing letters. The Naiyāyikas hold the opposite view. For them the letters are nothing but verbal utterances produced by the vibration of the vocal chord, although different and variable utterances of the same letter *k* indicate that there is a sound-universal called *k*-ness manifested in each such different utterance. The early Mīmāṃsā view is attributed to an ancient teacher Upavarṣa. An argument is given as follows, in Vācaspati's commentary, *Bhāmatī*.

When we recognize a letter *k* from an utterance and then recognize it again from another utterance, we in fact re-identify it as the same letter *k*. We do not recognize it as a *similar* letter *k*, as we sometimes do in the case of recognizing individuals belonging to the same class such as cows. In other words, we may recognize a cow and then another cow on the basis of similarity, but we recognize the letter *k* on two occasions of utterance on the basis of identity. To use modern jargon, this comes very close to saying that letters such as *k* and *c* are, on this view, something like *k*-type or *c*-type (which, being universal, are indestructible) and the actual utterances are to be regarded as tokens. But perhaps it is a risky correlation, for ordinarily we say that the tokens *represent* the type while Upavarṣa claims that the utterances only *manifest* the letter *k*.

Coming back to the Mīmāṃsā theory of word-meaning, it is claimed that the word itself or the final letter in the word c-o-w coupled with the memory-impressions of the previous letters is expressive of the meaning, and since the linguistic bit is permanently existent or 'a-temporal', what it denotes must also be an entity that is permanently existent or 'a-temporal'. Thus, the logic of this Mīmāṃsā contention presumes that the word 'cow' denotes or means the cow-universal or cowhood. We cognize an individual cow from the utterance 'cow' through implication, for universals are invariably located in individuals. There are several arguments formulated in the Mīmāṃsā school but we need not go into them here. However, we must note another essential component of the Mīmāṃsā view, namely that not only are words or linguistic bits eternally existent, they are also eternally related with whatsoever they mean. That is, the word–meaning relationship is underived, natural and eternally established, it is only our learning of it that is acquired through some convention or other. Convention *reveals* the relationship, does not create it. This opposes the Nyāya view, according to which not only are the linguistic units, letters or words, momentary objects, sensorily grasped (notwithstanding the fact that they may be instantiation of some sound-universals), but their relationship with meanings is also 'conventional', not 'natural'. The Naiyāyikas however allow that, with regard to some initial part of the language, this convention may be established by God at the beginning of creation. A very simple argument supporting the Mīmāṃsā naturalism regarding word–meaning relationship is that whoever started the original convention that established the relationship between a word and its meaning must have used a language, for without it even the convention could

not have been started. Thus, a sort of naturalism is shown to follow on pain of absurdity. The Naiyāyikas resort to God's will to avoid the quandary.

V

The grammarians held also that the linguistic units are non-products, hence eternal, and their relationship with meanings are eternally given. But while Kātyāyana held that names denote or mean the spatio-temporal things on the basis of some *quality* that belongs to the things, Bhartṛhari argued that a word or a linguistic unit denotes individuals indirectly on the basis of a universal which belongs in the word or linguistic unit itself (Herzberger, 1981, xviii). He sorts out two principal views opposing each other, one ascribed to the older grammarian Vyāḍi and the other to Vājapyāyana, both Pāṇini's contemporaries: the first regards the individual as the meaning of a word, the Individualist, while the second regards the universal as the meaning, the Universalist. The commentator (Helārāja) adds a third view which regards the individual characterized or qualified by the universal as constituting the meaning of a word. This view came to be regarded as the later (Navya) Nyāya view. Bhartṛhari however shifted attention from the objective or phenomenal universals to the 'word' universals. In his language, one is *artha-jāti* 'thing-universal' and the other is *śabda-jāti* 'word-universal', and it is asserted that all words first of all 'speak about' (mean or designate) their own (word-) universal and thereafter we *imagine* that (word-) universal as superimposed upon the forms or universals of (external) things. This is not exactly nominalism, for the universals of external things are not rejected, but the word-universals are recognized as primary meanings of the words in questions and an intimate (genetic) connection is established between the word-universal and the thing-universal. According to commentator Helārāja it kills two birds by a single stroke. If the 'basis' (see Kātyāyana's theory) for the use of the word 'cow' is cowhood (a universal) what would be the 'basis' for the use of the word 'cowhood'? We cannot say that there is another 'thing-universal' in cowhood. Hence we must take the *basis* for the use of any word to be the very same word-universal itself. Moreover, the word 'imagine' (above) may suggest that the word-universal is not really different from the thing-universal, for the latter may simply be

a 'transformation' (*vivarta*) of the former. Whether Bhartṛhari really meant the second point or not is rather unclear.

Bhartṛhari's main view of language is, of course, that each linguistic unit, a letter, or a word or a sentence, is actually an invariant *sphoṭa* (*varṇa-sphoṭa*, *pada-sphoṭa*, or *vākya-sphoṭa*), i.e., an invariant, sequenceless and partless 'whole' entity which is only manifested by the corresponding audible noise in speech. And at the level of *sphoṭa*, a linguistic unit and its meaning or the 'thought' it supposedly conveys are one and undifferentiated. It is strongly advocated by Bhartṛhari that there cannot be any proper awareness-episode without its being interpenetrated with words or language. Hence words and the concepts they convey cannot very well be separated in this view. But this leads to a different set of issues which we need not go into here (see chs. 7, 8, 9).

What is, however, important to note here is that Bhartṛhari clearly recognized that not only could the 'basis' or 'ground' for using a name be a universal, but also a uniform application of names to varying things deserves a uniform 'basis' or 'ground' of application or usage. Thus, varying particulars or things cannot be the basis for using a class-name (*jāti-śabda*), for this view would face two obvious objections, that of multiplicity (literally innumerability) and variability. Roughly this means that (1) learning such a name and what it means would be impossible, for there would be innumerable (*ananta*) particulars (e.g., cows of past, present and future), and (2) the practice of learning a name and using it would 'deviate' (cf. *vyabhicāra*) from each other, that is, the particulars in connection with which we learn the relevant name and the particulars in connection with which we use it would be variable.

This point was fully absorbed by Diṅnāga who propounded his theory of *apoha* or 'exclusion' as word-meanings rejecting the reality of the thing-universals or phenomenal universals. The Naiyāyikas propounded that *some* thing-universals (at least) are ontologically real entities and they uniformly and pervasively belong to the things or particulars. For them, therefore, the basis for the use of 'cow' to denote cows would unquestionably be the universal cowhood present in all cows and only in cows. Diṅnāga objected to the notion of such ontologically real universals. The uniform basis for the use of a class-name in language cannot be the particulars themselves for the reasons already stated (multiplicity and variability), but a functional property

(presumably without any ontological commitment) can be construed (or defined) and substituted as the required uniform basis for the uniform application of the term. The Buddhists defined this functional property as *exclusion of what is other than that*, where 'that' refers to the particular falling within the domain of the (meaning of the) class-name. Such a functional property is claimed to be defining the class, say, of all cows, past, present and future, in such a way that anything that is not a cow (horses, tables, etc.) would be excluded from its domain. Hence we can say that such a functional property characterizes each member of the cow-class and only such members, and the presence of some abstract but ontologically real universal, cow-hood, is not needed in order to make use of the class-name 'cow' to denote cows.

VI

The *apoha* doctrine is somewhat unique in Buddhism, first introduced by Diṅnāga to account for the origin of knowledge of the object in the hearer from hearing the word (*śabda*) without conceding *objective* thing-universals. Roughly the theory might have meant that a class-name such as 'cow' can be applied to a particular, not by virtue of its possession of some abstract property such as cow universal, but by a process of *exclusion* by which all contrary particulars, horses, etc., are excluded. For Diṅnāga, inference and word or language (*śabda*) generate knowledge in a similar fashion. Both essentially depend upon a process of *exclusion*. Just as the presence of smoke generates the knowledge of the presence of fire in a particular spot, say, on the hill, by excluding the spots where fire is definitely absent (cf. *vipakṣa-vyāvṛtta*), and just as this knowledge is aided by our observation of togetherness of fire and smoke on some occasion (*sapakṣa-sattva*), the word 'cow' generates the knowledge of a cow by excluding similarly the not-cow individuals, and this is also aided by our learning to use the word 'cow' in the presence of a cow on some occasion.

Dharmakīrti elaborated the *apoha* doctrine and developed some of its implications for the Buddhist position in general. This had consequences which might not have been in the mind of its original propounder, Diṅnāga. In any case the dispute over *apoha* continued for about seven centuries (until AD 1200), and the Buddhist philosophers vigorously defended *apoha*, sometimes in conceptualist vein and sometimes in nominalist vein. The tension between the two positions

was obvious. From another point of view, traditionally, they got divided into two camps: the Negativists emphasizing the negative character of the process of elimination or exclusion and the Positivists emphasizing the positive element in the knowledge, i.e. the particular, reached through such a process of elimination of contrary (rival) possibilities. Since the Buddhist phenomenalism admitted only momentary particulars as real entities there was an obvious problem of naming and talking about them in language, for linguistic description ordinarily presupposes recurrence or persistence of the objects described. The Buddhist theory of perception became relevant to this issue. True perception, according to Diṅnāga, is totally untouched by imagination or conceptual construction. One implication (not emphasized by Diṅnāga) was that it should then be completely prelinguistic or non-linguistic perception, and this would be diametrically opposed to the view of Bhartṛhari that each awareness, including sensory perceptual awareness, must be, in order to be of any use to us, also linguistic, i.e. penetrated with words. Wordless awareness is blind; so is the totally conception-free perception (see also ch. 12). It is clear from the problems and issues raised in this connection, that the philosophy of language here is only a part of the larger discipline, epistemology or philosophy of knowledge. Dharmakīrti argued that the sameness or similarity of the different cases of awareness (accounting for the use of the same word 'cow') is apparently felt by us in the presence of discretely unique particulars because we link them each to one single concept, and the discrete particulars themselves appear similar or same by virtue of their giving rise to the sameness or similarity in different awareness-cases. The issue between the Negativists and the Positivists may be put as follows. For the former, the function of language is negative (exclusion); it does not entail talking about any positive entity such as cow-universal. But the latter point out that the particulars are positive entities and language in some way or other must talk about them if it talks about anything.

5

THE *KĀRAKA* THEORY

I

The notion of *kāraka* is one of the central themes of the Pāṇinian system of grammar. G. Cardona has said that it is 'basic to Pāṇini's derivational system' (Cardona, 1976, 215). *Kāraka* is not defined by Pāṇini, but rule 1.4.23 '*kārake*' is read as a 'head rule' (*adhikāra*). It is followed by the definition of six varieties of *kāraka*: *apādāna*, *sampradāna*, *karaṇa* (instrument), *adhikaraṇa* (locus), *karman* (object), *kartṛ* (agent). *Apādāna* and *sampradāna* may be said to correspond with 'ablative and dative' in Western grammar. But since I hesitate to accept W. D. Whitney's characterization of *kāraka* categories as only 'a reflection of case form' (Whitney, 1893; Staal, 1972, 165), I have refrained from suggesting such equivalents at the outset. With that caution, I will freely use 'ablative' for *apādāna* and 'dative' for *sampradāna* for the sake of convenience.

A *kāraka*, as the name implies, is a contributory factor for some action. An action is usually denoted by a verbal form such as *patati* 'falls'. The action of falling requires at least three (or two) factors; e.g. *vṛkṣāt parṇam bhūmau patati*, 'a leaf falls from the tree to the ground'. Here there are three factors mentioned as contributing to the action of falling: the leaf, the tree and the ground. Pāṇini's rules assign each factor to a particular *kāraka* class for the purpose of deriving the said sentence. The classification is presumably based upon the particular role each plays with respect to the action. The leaf is the agent because it functions *independently* (cf. rule 1.4.54 *svatantraḥ kartā*; *svatantraḥ* = 'independent'), the tree is the 'fixed' (*dhrūva*, rule 1.4.24) point of departure and hence called *apādāna*, and the ground is the 'locus' (*ādhāra*, rule 1.4.45) of the falling leaf, and hence called *adhikaraṇa*. Similarly in *rājā viprāya sva-hastena dhanam dadāti*, 'the King gives wealth to the brahmin by his own hand', we have, besides the agent (the king), an object to be given (wealth, rule 1.4.49), a

recipient called *sampradāna* (the brahmin, rule 1.4.32), and an 'instrument' for giving (the hand, rule 1.4.42). The *kāraka* classification is set up to indicate conditions under which post-verbal and post-nominal affixes would be introduced. Although the above categories are defined by Pāṇini in terms of some semantic considerations, the *kārakas* are connected with the general syntactic system of the Sanskrit language. After applying the *kāraka* categorization rules to classify items, it becomes easy to formulate grammatical rules which introduce affixes to such items based upon such conditions. An object (*karman*) for example, takes the *-am* affix, one of the second triplet (*provided it is not otherwise expressed*), and an instrument takes the *-ṭā* affix (one of the third triplet).

II

Modern writers have disputed the precise status of *kāraka* categories. Some have argued that they are extra-linguistic, logical and ideational. Some claim that they are purely semantic. Others believe that they are also syntactic. I believe the controversy has been somewhat counter-productive (Cardona, 1976, 215–24). After defining the *kāraka* categories on the basis of semantic considerations, the agent, the locus, the object and so on, Pāṇini formulated a number of additional rules which widened the scope of each category formulating definition in terms of syntactic and other considerations. For example, rule 1.4.45 says that the substratum relative to an action is *adhikaraṇa*, the locus, but 1.4.46 says that the same substratum relative to an action would be *karman* 'the object' provided that action is denoted by particular verbs prefixed with particular pre-verbs, e.g. *adhi-śī*, *adhi-sthā* and *adhi-ās* (lying, staying or being seated).

1. *grāmam adhitiṣṭhati*: (He) stays in the village.
2. *grāme tiṣṭhati*: (He) stays in the village.

The village here is classified as the 'object' (*karman*) in 1 and the 'locus' (*adhikaraṇa*) in 2. This shows at least that a *kāraka* category like *karman* or *adhikaraṇa* is not defined by Pāṇini in purely semantic terms. The *kāraka* categories were introduced (obviously they were not exactly what were called 'cases' in Latin or Western grammar, e.g. the genitive was not a *kāraka*), as far as I can judge, as an expedient to facilitate Pāṇini's own description of the Sanskrit language. In particular they mediate between introduction of affixes in words and the representa-

tion of certain semantic relations. Unless the narrow, semantically conceived *kāraka* categories are widened (in the way Pāṇini did) to include various other items, grammar would have to be conceived differently. The same expediency might have prompted Pāṇini to disregard a distinction between agents (*kartṛ*) which are sensient beings and those which are not. He classifies both a man (Devadatta) and an axe as agents receiving the same analysis and (linguistic) derivation.

> *Devadattaḥ vṛkṣaṃ chinatti*: 'Devadatta is cutting the tree'.
> *Paraśur vṛkṣaṃ chinatti*: 'The axe is cutting the tree'.

It is well known that Pāṇini and the Pāṇinīyas were *śabdapramāṇakāḥ* 'those who regard speech patterns as authority'. Patañjali has said (which has often been quoted): 'We accept the authority of the *speech*. What *speech* 'tells' us is what we depend upon (for deciding issues).' This, I believe, means that we should put stress upon the point that grammar is not concerned with ontology (or semantics, i.e. things and events) but with what people actually say, or rather how people speak of things and events. Pāṇini's *kāraka* categories fit in well with this point and hence we can easily account for such usages as *sthālī pacati*, 'the cauldron cooks', although we know very well that the cauldron is the substrate where cooking takes place, not the agent of cooking. But philosophically, one can still think of the cauldron as a contributing factor to the action of cooking and some agency may be attributed to it.

This syntactic-semantic dispute over the nature of the *kāraka* categories might be read as a reflex of a much older dispute between the logicians (Naiyāyikas) and the grammarians (Vaiyākaraṇas). The Naiyāyikas were *artha-pramāṇakāḥ* 'those who regard things and events as authority' as opposed to *śabdapramāṇakāḥ*. They were interested in the way the world is (or is supposed to be), not particularly in how people speak about it. They were, to be sure, concerned with semantics, ontology and epistemic questions, although they would try to derive their insights through an analysis of how people speak about such things. Vātsyāyana (*c.* AD 350) got involved in the discussion of *kāraka* categories while he was trying to answer the Mādhyamika criticism of the logicians' distinction of *pramiti* 'knowledge', *pramātṛ* 'knower', *prameya* 'object to be known' and *pramāṇa* 'means of knowledge'. In the grammarian's terminology, the first one is an 'action' (meaning of a verb) and the other three are three *kārakas*, the agent, the object and the instrument. Nāgārjuna (founder

of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism) argues that this popular distinction (prevalent both in grammar and logic) is arbitrary, for the same item can be the 'object' according to one description and the 'instrument' according to another. Vātsyāyana in reply said that the fundamental *kāraka* classification was based upon some property (power) grounded in the things, and a thing can have many powers. In other words, it is not a classification of things but of powers in the thing. I quote from Vātsyāyana under *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.16:

> (All) *kāraka* words apply through the incidence of some ground or other. In 'the tree stands (there)' the tree is the agent because it has 'independence' (Pāṇini's rule 1.4.54) with regard to the matter of standing. In '(he) sees the tree', the tree is 'ardently desired' through the action of seeing (by the agent) and hence it is the object. In '(he) shows the moon by the tree', the tree is the 'chief instrument' for showing the moon, and hence is the instrument (*karaṇa*). In '(he) sprinkles water for the tree', the tree is intended to be 'the beneficiary' of the action of sprinkling, and hence is the *sampradāna* 'beneficiary' or 'recipient'. In 'the leaf falls from the tree', the tree is the *apādāna* 'fixed point of departure' for it is the unmoved point when separation through movement is intended. In 'the crows live in the tree', the tree is the locus by virtue of its being the substrate with regard to the 'action' of living. In this way it is neither the thing itself nor the action itself that is a *kāraka*. What then? When a thing is a participant in an action or when it is endowed with a special functional activity, it becomes a *kāraka*. That which is independent in performing an act is the agent, it is neither the bare thing nor the bare action. That which is most desired to be obtained (by the agent) is the object, it is neither the bare thing nor bare action. In this way one can explain the notion of the most efficacious in defining the instrument and so on. The assigning of *kāraka* categories follows this rule. A *kāraka* category applies neither to the bare thing nor to the (mere) action. What then? It applies to the thing that participates in action and to what is endowed with some special functional activity.

Vātsyāyana apparently refers to Pāṇini's six major rules that 'define' the six *kārakas* in their *initial* or *primary* meanings and ignores the usage of *kāraka* categories in their extended or secondary senses. In these major rules, the semantic critiera for the *kāraka* categories are most dominant. But as I have already noted, Pāṇini's assignment of *kāraka* categories was based upon many other considerations. For

example, sometimes presence of certain pre-verbs (*upasarga*) in the root verb turns a 'locus' into an 'object' (rule 1.4.46). Here the Pāṇinīyas will say that the same item village (see page 41, examples 1, 2) can manifest both powers or properties, that of being a substratum in 2, and that of being an object in 1. The accompanying condition (in this case, the presence of certain pre-verbs) determines which aspect or power is to be given prominence. The moral is that the usage must determine the grammatical theories, not the meaning. Patañjali's idea of '*śabdapramāṇakāḥ*' is again vindicated here.

III

The question about the 'quiddity' of *kāraka*, i.e. the question, 'what is a *kāraka*?', has not been settled by Pāṇini. Patañjali has remarked under rule 1.4.23 that the derivative meaning of *kāraka* will help us to understand its actual usage. He derives it as *karoti kriyāṃ nirvartayati* 'that which does, performs the action'. *Kāraka* thus means a do-er, an actor, hence a participant in an action. This is, however, ambiguous. There are in general two suggested definitions of *kāraka* prevalent in the tradition of both grammar and logic. One is *kriyānimitta* 'causal factor of an action/verb', and the other is *kriyānvayin*, 'syntactically connected with action/verb *kriyā*'. Both definitions exploit the ambiguity of the term *kriyā*. It may stand for an action (or at least the meaning of a verb) or just the verb-form, a syntactic entity. I believe the former definition depends upon the meaning, action, while the latter upon the verb-form. If this is a correct appraisal, then of the two definitions we may say that the former has semantic overtones while the latter has syntactic overtones. There is need for another subtlety here. The *kriyā* 'action' has also a technical sense, it connotes meanings of verbal roots (*dhātu*) or 'action'. But the meaning of some root (*dhātu*) can denote even a substance. For *dhātu* refers to the items in the list of *dhātu* 'roots' or 'bases' in the *Dhātupāṭha*, a text attached to Pāṇini's grammar. Now it just happens that some *dhātu* 'bases' found in the list do not mean activity, but a substance, e.g. the base *gaḍi* means 'part of the face'. The sentence '*gaṇḍati kapolam*', consisting of a noun and a verb, is interpreted as meaning 'the cheek is what is identical with a part of the face'. Here *gaṇḍati*, the verb, denotes *kriyā*, but what it denotes is not an action in the ordinary sense, but a substance, part of the face. We have to call such items *kriyā* and thereby explain the cheek as the agent, a *kāraka* in relation to this *kriyā*. We

should note that there is no 'is' of identity in the given Sanskrit sentence. It consists of a noun and a verb—both apparently refer to the same object.

A further point is this. If *kāraka* means a 'do-er' then it would be synonymous with the agent (*kartṛ*) and the other *kārakas* will have to be excluded. Bhartṛhari (*c.* AD 450) says that we can get around this difficulty in the following way. All the *kāraka*-items are in some sense doing something or performing some function towards the completion of the main action. When Devadatta is cooking, the action is a set of functions extending over some time, the logs burn to cook, the pot holds the rice for cooking, the rice-grains soften in the process of cooking and so on. Hence in this rather loose sense, they are all behaving as agents, i.e. they are characterized by agenthood. However, we call one the instrument, another the object, and another the locus when we consider the difference of their roles and functions towards the completion of the main action (Bhartṛhari, III.7.18).

If *kāraka* is defined simply as a causal factor of an action we underline its semantic aspect, and if it is defined as what is (syntactically) connected with the action-verb we underline its syntactic or its grammatical aspect. Both these definitions have been faulted. The causal relationship between a *kāraka* and the action must be taken in a broader sense so that it would include both direct relationship and the indirect or 'chain' relationship. For otherwise only the agent or the instrument would be designated as a *kāraka*. The *sampradāna*, 'recipient' (or the dative), and *apādāna*, the 'unmoved point in departure' (or the ablative), are only very indirectly connected with the action by causal relationship. Now if we widen the notion of causal relationship to include both direct and indirect relations in the present context, we make the definition too wide or over-extensive (*ativyāpta*). For there is another peculiarity in the notion of *kāraka* that is not shared by Western case grammar. The so-called genitive (Pāṇini's term for it is 'the remainder' = *śeṣa*) is not a *kāraka*. A discussion of this point will further illuminate the notion of *kāraka*. A *kāraka* underlines the relation between a 'thing' (*dravya*) and an action. The genitive or 'the remainder' is what expresses a relation between one 'thing' or 'substance' (*dravya*) and another, e.g. ownership or parenthood—'Caitra's wealth', 'Caitra's son'. We have to be careful, however, to distinguish between 'the remainder' relation which is to be contrasted with *kāraka* relation and the sixth triplet (or sixth '*case*'-affix, *ṣaṣṭhī vibhakti*) which is used to express both. In *Rāmasya putraḥ* 'Rāma's son', the sixth affix denotes

the 'remainder' relation, but in *Rāmasya gamanam*, 'Rāma's going', and *jalasya pānam*, 'drinking of water', the sixth affix denotes the agency of Rāma, a *kāraka* relation, in the first, and the 'objecthood' (*karmatva*) of water, another *kāraka* relation, in the second. There is some laxity here in the usage. The sixth affix is also used in the case of some other *kāraka* relation, the object, etc., provided the speaker wishes to emphasize only a general *kāraka* relationship, but not any special *kāraka* relationship. In any case, it is agreed by all parties that the 'remainder' relation must be distinguished from *kāraka* relation, although both relations may be expressed by the sixth affixes. At the syntactic level, the 'remainder' relation introduces the sixth affix to combine two nominal or pronominal words. But a *kāraka* introduces sixth affixes that combine a nominal or pronominal word with a verb.

We can now explain the over-extension of the two definitions above. Consider the example: *Caitrasya taṇḍulam pacati*, '(he) cooks the rice of Caitra'. Here Caitra does not fall under any of the *kāraka* categories; it is a *śeṣa*, 'the remainder'. But with a little ingenuity one can argue that our 'extended' notion of causal relationship will also hold between Caitra and cooking. For the cook could not have cooked the rice in question if Caitra somehow were not a factor in it (Caitra being the owner of the rice may have given permission to cook it, etc.). Hence the definition based upon causal relationship is too wide. Can we say that 'Caitra' is not syntactically connected (*anvita*) with the verb-form ('cooks') directly and therefore the second definition based upon syntactic connection is faultless? Not quite. We cannot use 'direct syntactic connection' in our definition of *kāraka*. For Pāṇini has several rules (from 2.3.51 to 2.3.56) which mention several specific (syntactic and other) conditions that turn a specific *kāraka*, an object or an instrument, into a *non-kāraka*, *śeṣa*, the remainder. Consider these examples: *mātuḥ smarati*, '(he) remembers mother', and *sarpiṣo jānīte*, '(he) acts with the idea that there is butter'. Here both words expressing mother and butter have direct syntactic connection with their respective verbs. Both are recognized as *śeṣa* 'the remainder', a non-*kāraka*, and therefore take the sixth affix. By using the word 'direct' to qualify the syntactic connection we cannot avoid the overlap. Besides, use of 'direct' cannot be replaced by 'direct or indirect' or by 'no qualification at all', for then in *Rāmasya putram abhivādayate*, '(he) greets Rāma's son', '*Rāmasya*' is at least indirectly connected with the verb through the word denoting son. This will

be another case of over-extension, for *Rāma* in the given sentence is a non-*kāraka*, it belongs to the 'remainder' category (*śeṣa*).

IV

The Navya-naiyāyikas of the fifteenth/sixteenth century AD devised a way out of this difficulty. I shall follow Bhavānanda in suggesting this device. Bhavānanda says that a *kāraka*, both in its principal sense and its secondary sense, is to be defined as that which is syntactically connected (*anvayin*) with the action verb through the intermediary of the meaning of *vibhaktis* (the so-called case-affixes). It is clear here that the *kāraka* categories are intermediaries between the semantic interpretation and grammatical suffixes. A principal *kāraka*, according to Bhavānanda, is what both denotes an explicit causal factor and is connected with the verb-form syntactically through the meanings of case-affixes (*vibhakti*). Obviously in the secondary sense, a *kāraka* category is determined by various syntactic and other considerations. Thus in *cakṣuṣā paśyati*, 'sees by the eye', the eye is clearly a causal factor. But in *ghaṭam jānāti*, 'knows the pot', the pot may not be, under certain views, strictly a causal factor for knowledge. It is at least at the syntactic level connected with the action verb through the intermediary of the meaning of the second triplet.

The reason for adding the qualification 'through the intermediary of the meaning of case-affixes' is not absolutely clear. Bhavānanda believes that this will avoid the overlap with adverbs, e.g. *stokam pacati* '(he) seldom cooks'. The word *stoka* takes second triplet but according to one theory these adverbial affixes do not denote any meaning. They are used only to turn the stem into a usable (inflected) Sanskrit word (*pada*) in a sentence. Hence the qualification is necessary to exclude adverbs from the domain of *kāraka*. But according to another view, the adverbs are to be treated as adjectives or qualifiers of verbs. The affix that we add in this way to the adverbial stem is denotative of *abheda* or identity with what they qualify. On this view, however, adverbs like adjectives will be treated as *kārakas*. Hence we do not need this qualification to exclude them. Some say that the said qualification is needed to exclude from the domain, effort or *kṛti*, for *kṛti* (according to the Naiyāyikas) as the meaning of the verbal affixes would otherwise be covered by the definition. But in any case, this qualification cannot be happily explained.

The main purpose of defining *kāraka* would be to exclude the non-

kāraka relations which Pāṇini called *śeṣa*, the 'remainder', and which are usually denoted by the sixth triplet. Syntactically, the words denoting these remainders, or more specifically the word taking the sixth triplet, are also connected with verb forms as in *Caitrasya pacati*, '(he) cooks Caitra's (rice)'. Thus Bhavānanda at the end says that the correct definition would be as a follows: A *kāraka* is what is syntactically connected with the action-verb (*anvita*) and is endowed with any one of the six properties or powers: agenthood, objecthood, instrumentality, recipienthood, *apādānatva* 'being a fixed point of departure', and locushood. The crucial term here is *anvaya*. It is sometimes used in an ambiguous fashion, although predominantly I believe it means syntactic connection between grammatical or syntactic elements. But it may also indicate its semantic counterpart, the connection between meanings of grammatical and other elements. When we do not wish to emphasize the syntactic connection (of a nominal stem) with some verbal form, we opt for a non-*kāraka* relation. Similarly in *daṇḍena ghaṭaḥ*, 'the pot is (produced) by the stick', the stick is called simply *hetu*, a causal factor, not a *kāraka*, because its explicit connection with the action-verb is missing. Pāṇini formulated a special rule (rule 2.3.23) to explain the significance of the third triplet here. The same stick would be a *kāraka*, an instrument, and this relation would be denoted by the same third triplet, by the ordinary rule for the application of the third triplet to denote instrumentality, as in *daṇḍena ghaṭaḥ kṛtaḥ* 'the pot is produced by the rod', provided an explicit syntactic connection with a verb is shown.

The concept of *kāraka* was presumably clear to the native language user as it was to Pāṇini. But it is almost impossible to define it or to find a *lakṣaṇa*, i.e., a uniquely distinguishing feature that would belong to all and only the six well-known *kārakas*. Various alternative definitions have been suggested in order to try to capture this intuition, but they fail to do so completely. Bhavānanda finally resolves that we have to list the six powers independently and then say that any one of them would supply the ground (*nimitta*) for applying the term *kāraka*. It is not unusual to say in philosophy that we can possess a unifying intuition to combine these six powers under one heading, *kāraka*, but we cannot often fully and faultlessly articulate this intuition in a logical definition that would totally avoid the faults of both over-extension and under-extension. But some idea about what a *kāraka* is can nevertheless be gathered from an attempt to formulate various definitions and examine their soundness or correctness.

6

KNOWLEDGE FROM LINGUISTIC UTTERANCE

I. THE CAUSAL MECHANISM

Most Indian philosophers accept that linguistic utterance is another (in fact, a very important) source of knowledge. It has been recognized as verbal testimony in Western tradition. In giving an account of it, I shall follow the Nyāya school. According to Nyāya it is a separate type of *pramā*, a different type of knowledge, the causal factors of which cannot be assimilated into those of perception or inference. Predominant Western views are divided. According to some it is an inference, while according to others, it is a sort of perception. The Nyāya view differs from both. Since type-distinction in knowledge is taken to be based upon the distinction of the ways by which we acquire it (upon the crucial causal factors that generate it), we must distinguish this utterance-generated knowledge from perception and inference.

Śabda stands for human speech and hence for linguistic utterances. Such utterances are usually made by a speaker, a person who is a participant in a linguistic community. The mechanism can be understood on the basis of the following considerations: (1) The speaker emits such sound as is identifiable as a piece of linguistic utterance. (2) This is done to communicate some knowledge or information to a hearer. (3) The hearer is a participant in the same linguistic community (i.e. he has linguistic competence). (4) The utterance must be that of a sentence which consists of words, sometimes simply a word *plus* a suffix. (In English it can consist of a single word but that word would be a one-word sentence.) (5) The hearer has auditory perception of each word in the utterance. (6) The hearer, as a consequence of (3) and (5), is reminded of the meanings/objects/things associated with each word. (7) The hearer then acquires knowledge of the con-

nected meaning communicated by the utterance. (The hearer thus comes to know what the speaker wants him to be informed of by the utterance.) (8) Several auxiliary factors or pieces of knowledge are worth mentioning to explain how the final knowledge is reached as the end-product: (a) The words must be mutually related (syntactically) to constitute a linguistic sentence. Call it syntactic expectancy, for it is seen that one word or one element 'expects' the other words to form together with itself an independent linguistic utterance. This ensures indirectly the grammatical acceptability of the sentence uttered. Words are *expected* to be grammatically tied; an analytic list of necessary words and suffixes will not do. (b) The meaning of the word-elements must fit or be compatible with each other or the hearer must have some awareness of such compatibility or, at least, he must not be aware of any incompatibility or lack of fitness. Call this the 'fitness' condition. 'Fire' and 'dampness' are not compatible, neither are 'pigs' and 'fly'. Another way of putting the same point is to say that if the hearer knows that 'pigs' (the meaning of 'pigs') and 'fly' (the meaning of 'fly') do not fit, he would not have any *śābdabodha*, i.e., any language-generated knowledge, from the utterance 'pigs fly'. (c) Word-elements must be spatio-temporally proximate to each other so that the hearer will be able to discern the togetherness of the two or more word-elements. Call this *āsatti*, physical proximity. (d) If some word in the sentence is ambiguous (usually has two or more meanings), the hearer should be able to make an intelligent guess about the speaker's intention from the context, the situation of utterance, etc. Thus, ambiguities can sometimes be resolved as in 'Please bring me *saindhava*' uttered during a meal by a speaker. *Saindhava* can either mean 'a horse' or 'some salt'. Obviously the latter meaning is intended by the speaker, as the context no doubt indicates.

In the above analysis of the 'causal' mechanism, the utterance triggers off the process. The knowledge of the word in the hearer (derived from hearing) is the efficient causal factor ('instrument') for the final (hearer's) knowledge of the meaning of the uttered sentence. The final piece of knowledge (called a *pramā*, also a *śābdabodha*) is produced through another intermediate factor called *vyāpāra*, 'function' or 'operation', which is in this case the resulting remembrance of the meanings of the individual words from the auditory perception of the words. The theory is that an efficient causal factor (an 'instrument' = *karaṇa*) needs an intermediate factor (called *vyāpāra*) to produce the end-product (*phala*, in this case a *pramā*).

The following *skeletal* causal model is pre-supposed. We write with a pen. The pen is an 'instrument' (the most efficient causal factor) for the end-product, writing on the paper. But besides the agent (the writer, who is not considered in this skeletal account), the pen needs to be in physical contact with the paper to produce writing. Such contact with the paper is its *vyāpāra*, 'operation' or 'function' or 'intermediate causal factor'. This intermediate causal factor owes its origin to (is *caused* by) the pen and at the same time causes the writing (the final result) to come about. Hence here is the skeletal causal model:

$$(I + V) \rightarrow R,$$

where I stands for the 'instrumental cause', V for the intermediate *vyāpāra*, and R for the end-product.

The model is applied to explain the origin of any mental event, specially the cognitive events we call knowledge-episodes. In the case of perception, the sensory faculty is the 'instrument'. What is *instrumental* to generate a piece of knowledge (a *pramā*) is called an epistemic means, a *pramāṇa*. Thus the sense-faculty is called a *pramāṇa* (I) in the case of perception and the sense-object connection is the intermediate *vyāpāra* (V). The end product (R) is the perceptual knowledge. In the case of inference, the knowledge of concomitance or pervasion between the evidence or reason and the inferable feature (*sādhya*) is called the *pramāṇa* (I), and the combined knowledge (technically called a *parāmarśa*, a judgement having a special structure) that the particular evidence in question is such an evidence as is pervaded by the inferable feature, is called the intermediate factor or *vyāpāra* (V). The knowledge of concomitance is usually derived from memory. It is usually a knowledge of the connection between universal features or sortals. But the final premise which gives, i.e. produces, the inferential conclusion—the final episode of *knowledge* derived from an immediately preceding knowledge-episode—must be of the form: the particular case (P) contains this particular evidence, i.e. instantiation of the same evidence which is pervaded by (concomitant with) the feature we intend to infer. Thus the instantiation of the model '$(I + V) \rightarrow R$' in the case of perception is:

(The sense-organ + The sense-object connection) →
Perceptual knowledge,

and in the case of inference:

(Knowledge of concomitance + *Parāmarśa*) → Inference.

The same applied to *śābdabodha* is given as follows:

(Knowledge of the word-elements + Knowledge of their meanings)
→ (Hearer's) knowledge-episode from *śabda*.

The above account is based mainly on Gaṅgeśa and Mathurānātha. To avoid unnecessary complications, I have omitted references to many minor details as well as the difference of opinion among the Naiyāyikas regarding such details. For example, some would argue that the most immediate factor (e.g. the sense-object contact in the case of perception) should be called the most efficient factor, i.e., the 'instrument' (and hence the *pramāṇa*). We need not go into such details here (see Matilal, 1985, pp. 372–8).

II. SOME AUXILIARY FACTORS

In the case of the production of the hearer's knowledge from the hearing of the utterance (i.e. *śābdabodha*) several other factors demand attention. The hearer's knowledge of the word-meanings from the utterance of the words is generated according to the following psychological rule of association and memory. The hearer is a competent language-user, and he is acquainted with the connection between word and meaning. This acquaintance or cognition may be called *śakti-jñāna* or *vṛtti-jñāna*. The said connection is called *vṛtti*, and an awareness of it is therefore called *vṛtti-jñāna*. The general nomological rule is that whenever such cognition of the connection between the two items is present, a cognition of one will generate remembrance of the other. Hence if words are cognized, meanings are presented to the hearer. This is therefore noted as an auxiliary factor. It is easy to see why this factor is necessary. If the hearer hears a word, say 'pot', and comprehends its meaning, and then remembers through association another item, say 'space' (since he recalls that a pot is always in a space) he may then have an awareness where the two items are computed as 'a pot in a space'. But this would NOT be a piece of knowledge derived from any linguistic expressions or *śabda*, for the second item, the space, was presented in a different way, not as the meaning of the word '(the) space' by the utterance of the word '(the) space'. The above factor is noted so as to ensure that the resulting knowledge is generated solely from the linguistic expressions through our cognition of their meanings.

Some further considerations enter into the account of the origin of speech-generated knowledge. Naiyāyikas note four further auxiliaries

which are also necessary. Even if the bits of knowledge of the word-meanings are presented by the knowledge of the words in the relevant manner there must exist syntactic expectancy between the words uttered in sequence. That is, words must be related to each other in the way they are made to relate in a given linguistic practice. There is syntactic expectancy between Word A and Word B, if the utterance of A cannot contribute to the knowledge of the sentence-meaning without being in combination with Word B. It follows that the utterances of words must follow an established linguistic practice, i.e. the grammar and syntax of a particular language. Some have said that syntactic expectancy is in fact the sequential order in which words and suffixes are arranged in a particular language following its rules of grammar and syntax (*ānupūrvī = ākāṅkṣa*). A sequence of word utterance that violates these established rules will not be causally potent to set the mechanism in action and produce the relevant hearer's knowledge. With such input, there is no such output as an episode of word-generated knowledge.

The words and inflections may be juxtaposed following the rules of grammar and syntax, but if they are juxtaposed at random in this way, the result may still be at times a nonsensical utterance such as 'Pigs fly' or 'Drink bananas'. These utterances lack semantic fitness or compatibility (*yogyatā*). Again, such utterances cannot be proper inputs for the *śābdabodha* mechanism. The hearer, in others words, should *not* recognize that the items do *not* fit with one another. Such recognition hinders *śābdabodha*. Hence, lack of such recognition is a necessary factor, another auxiliary factor for language-generated *śābdabodha*. The hearer should also have clear indication as to the spatio-temporal togetherness of the relevant words. This is ensured by the physical proximity of such words. If the two words, 'drink' and 'milk', are set apart spatio-temporally or separated by such words as 'eat' and 'rice', as in 'Drink eat milk rice', the hearer may fail to get the message. The hearer's awareness of the meaning of the uninterrupted sequence of words is another auxiliary. This seeks to avoid to some extent the structural or constructional ambiguities of sentences, etc.

III. THREE WAYS OF REPRESENTING KNOWLEDGE FROM WORDS: *MĪMĀṂSĀ, VYĀKARAṆA* AND *NYĀYA*

Sometimes in a natural language, we have words with double or multiple meaning, homonyms and homophones. In such cases, the context of utterances helps the hearer to resolve ambiguities and get

at the meaning intended by the original speaker. An awareness of the speaker's intention is necessary, and this is called *tātparya-jñāna*. If somebody asks for a pen while writing, it may be assumed that he intends (to get) a writing pen, not a play-pen or ox-pen. Although it is not often obvious, an awareness of the speaker's intention can be a very general condition for *śābdabodha*, a key to interpreting any utterance made. Otherwise, a parrot's utterance may prompt us to action.

So far, I have delineated the mainstream view in the Navya-Nyāya tradition, ignoring any difference of opinion and controversies within the Nyāya tradition or even between Nyāya schools and others. My concern here has been to give a causal account of the origin of the mental episode called *śābdabodha*, i.e. the hearer's knowledge from the linguistic utterance, underlining the usual nomological connection between mental events. '*Śābdabodha*' is also used, by extension, to denote the description of the content of the hearer's relevant knowledge. Given a sentence-utterance, one may ask: What is its *śābdabodha*? The answer is presumably given by describing the knowledge-episode which is produced in the hearer by the utterance. In this way, an instance of *śābdabodha* is given by the description of exactly the message contained in and communicated through the utterance of the sentence. This description corresponds very roughly to what we sometimes call a 'paraphrase', provided such paraphrasing is done following a definite set of 'translational' rules. The idea is to represent the meaning of each word along with its semantic connection with others in the cluster. Implicit relations are thereby made explicit and the meaning intended by the speaker of the original sentence is supposed to be rendered unambiguous. This process is variously called *śābdabodha, anvayabodha* or *vākyārtha-bodha* (knowledge of the 'meaning' of the sentence).

I have used the word 'meaning' here with some trepidation. It is clear from the above that the Naiyāyikas along with many others in India are trying to articulate the hearer's meaning. Meaning, as the modern adage goes, is not in the 'heads of the speakers', nor is it in the 'heads of the hearers'. In actuality the hearers sometimes may hear but not fully comprehend what is said. What goes on in the 'inner world' of the individual hearer is not presumably accessible to us. We therefore conceive here an 'ideal hearer' who is also a competent language-user. The idea is that the structured thought or knowledge-episode that is supposed to arise (being caused in the above manner) in the 'ideal hearer' is what is shared by all language-users and hence

knowledgehood. In order to avoid the Gettier-like counter-examples to the early definition of knowledge found in the Indian tradition, Navya-nyāya, following Gaṅgeśa, may resolve to take any *true* belief to be knowledge, i.e., knowledge *simpliciter*. The question of justification arises, in this view, only at the second level when one tries to ascertain (i.e. to know) the knowledgehood of the acquired belief. According to Nyāya, to know and to know that one knows are two distinct events, caused by two distinct sets of causal conditions. The second-level knowledge, i.e. the knowledge of knowledge that *p*, is usually a sort of an implicit inference which immediately follows the episode of knowledge *simpliciter*. The basis of this inference will be an evidence, and this takes the role of the so-called justification. Hence in most 'Gettier' cases, where a *true* belief has been acquired but through a *wrong* route, although there is some justification for the belief, it may be regarded as knowledge *simpliciter* on this view. This seems to go against the generally accepted Western 'linguistic' insight, according to which the 'Gettier' examples are regarded as counter-examples, i.e. non-knowledge, although they are all true beliefs and happen to have some justification. In the particular Navya-nyāya view, in the case of knowledge by testimony, if all the necessary causal factors co-operate and no inhibiting factors are present then there will arise true belief, i.e. knowledge, in the hearer in all such cases, although at the next moment, when the hearer is about to embark upon the venture of knowing whether he has had knowledge, doubt will infect the attitude and destroy the previous lack of uncertainty. Lack of uncertainty is constitutive of the previous attitude of true belief (and hence it was claimed to be 'knowledge' or *pramā*). Udayana said (*NTP*) that we all have a strong natural disposition (cf. *samutkaṭa-vāsanā*) to believe *truly*, i.e. to have knowledge, so our first gut reaction is not to look for falsifiers. (Compare it with, not gullibility, but the Davidson-like point that 'believes truly' is generally implicated by 'believes'; see Davidson, 1975, 166.)

Note that at the second level, Gettier-like counter-examples may be easily detected and excluded. Following Vācaspati, we may first claim that not all cases of cognition or true belief when they arise need justification, for in many 'familiar' cases we act automatically without even unconsciously asking for justification. In the 'unfamiliar' cases or in cases where doubt has crept in, we generally use two types of inference to establish knowledgehood or truth of the occurrent belief. One is based upon 'confirmatory behaviour' as evidence, and

the other upon 'likeness with the familiar' as evidence. Another type may use 'assurance about the operation of adequate causal factors' as evidence. In any case, if the inference is right, it will establish knowledgehood and the required *justification* will be given. This means that the person now not only has knowledge (an occurrent true belief) but also has *a right to be sure*. He is now entitled to *call* his cognition a case of knowledge. In some (Gettier-like) counter-examples, if the resulting belief is true, it would be knowledge, according to Gaṅgeśa, and if untrue, it would not be knowledge, although in either case the person may go on to *call* (cf. *vyavahāra*) it knowledge. For, according to the view we are expounding, speech-behaviour that something is *X* (utterance 'it is *X*') ordinarily presupposes awareness of awareness that the thing is *X*. I cannot rightly say 'this is a camel' unless I am aware that I know that this is a camel. If, in some Gettier-like cases, I am wrong in my inference about the knowledgehood of the given occurrent belief (for the evidence may be a pseudo-evidence), then I am mistaken about the truth of my belief—and this is in accord with Nyāya fallibilism: not all knowledge-claims can be sustained.

IX. KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPEAKER'S QUALITIES

We may note here another peculiarity. Both Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā accept testimony as a distinct source of knowledge, not perception or inference. But the Mīmāṃsakas take the testimony of scriptural statements as knowledge, for they inform us about things (heaven, afterlife, moral goodness, etc.) which we have no other way of knowing. Hence they are informative, and not repetitions of what we know already. But ordinary statements do not yield knowledge in this sense, for they require that the speaker be trustworthy. But if the hearer must have the knowledge that the speaker is trustworthy or reliable with regard to the knowledge contained in the utterance '*a* is *b*', then by the same token he should know already that *a* is *b*. Hence his final cognition from the said utterance lacks novelty, i.e., is not informative, for it repeats what he has learnt already when he learnt about the trustworthiness of the speaker.

Gaṅgeśa says that the knowledge of trustworthiness of the speaker, for this very reason, should not be counted as a causal factor for our knowledge by testimony. An ordinary utterance contains the 'freshness' condition, for it informs, and the hearer obtains knowledge (provided the other conditions are fulfilled) directly without waiting

for the knowledge of the trustworthiness of the speaker. Besides, it is almost impossible to know that the speaker in this particular case is trustworthy before the hearer can verify that what he cognized was knowledge. Lack of doubt about the speaker's credibility would be enough for the required verbal knowledge to arise.

We can now take up the second issue. How can the claim be justified, that we will *first* have a knowledge-claim generated in us by the utterance even when we already know that the speaker is a compulsive liar (or a compulsive joker)? This might support the claim of the Mīmāṃsakas that the knowledge of the reliability and sincerity of the speaker is a necessary causal factor to avoid the possibility of false belief being generated by such utterances in the hearer. For otherwise we will have a lingering doubt from the beginning, even when the sentence is uttered, about whether what it says is true or not. Gaṅgeśa denies this point. For him, consideration of the speaker's qualities, reliability, sincerity or competence, might be needed at the second level, to determine knowledgehood of the knowledge-claim, but not at the first instant.

Our doubting attitude about whether what the speaker says is true or not, whether there is such a state of affairs or not, cannot at the first instant *stop* the occurrence of the knowledge-claim but rather, paradoxically enough, helps to generate such knowledge. For both inferential knowledge and perceptual knowledge do arise in the face of such doubt. For instance, seeing and doubting from a distance whether the tall man is my friend or not, I approach and see that he is my friend. Similarly, doubt is also what motivates someone to look for the evidence which will, by inference, remove the doubt one way or another. In fact, Nyāya has sometimes said that doubt is the psychological factor for inference to arise (cf. *saṃśaya-pakṣatā*). The same will be the case with testimony (Gaṅgeśa, 1892–1901 edn., 154–6).

The opponent may argue further: Well, the said doubt may not be the *knowledge-stopper*, but because a sentence may very well be, and frequently is, composed (and uttered) even when it lacks a real state of affairs as its reference, the certainty of the verbal knowledge is imperilled nevertheless by this overwhelming possibility. Gaṅgeśa says in reply that such uncertainties may creep in only after a belief or a knowledge-claim, by testimony, i.e. from the utterance, has already occurred. Such uncertainty presupposes the prior presence of a knowledge-claim.

I shall conclude with a comment on the notion of the speaker's intention. In the case of ambiguous utterances, Nyāya admits that knowledge of the speaker's intention is a necessary factor for knowledge by testimony. Consider our example: 'Bring Saindhava'. The question arises, 'Will not knowledge of this type of the speaker's intention render the emerging knowledge from the utterance superfluous or repetitious?' For the Prābhākaras argued that if the knowledge of the speaker's intention is a necessary causal factor (as it should be) in the case of ordinary (non-scriptural, non-Vedic) utterances, then such knowledge of the speaker's intention to communicate that *A* is *B* will already contain the knowledge that *A* is *B*, and hence the resulting belief would be repetitious and redundant, and not knowledge. The Nyāya answer however is that the knowledge of the speaker's intention in the above case, derivable from context, etc., simply tells that the particular word refers to salt. The knowledge of the full-fledged fact that the speaker's utterance intends to communicate is not needed beforehand.

Suppose the utterance is 'Saindhava is white'. The speaker intends: a horse is white. For such disambiguation, we do not need to know his full intention. We need only to know that the speaker is prompted by a sort of knowledge where he intends a horse to be a qualificand. But the emergent verbal knowledge would be technically different. It would be a case of knowledge where the qualificandhood is resident in a horse and is *conditioned* by the qualifierhood resident in whiteness.

There is a touch of technical subtlety here, which I shall briefly describe. The utterance is 'Saindhava is white'. Now a horse may be white as much as salt may be. Hence, faced with such an utterance, the hearer would have no knowledge by testimony generated in him. Why? He cannot decide one way or the other; he does not have a *standard* interpretation. This is why I am eager to add the notion of a *standard* interpretation in the beginning. Now here it seems that the sufficiency of the three jointly necessary conditions is jeopardized. We need to add the knowledge of the speaker's intention to make it sufficient. But this is not, Gaṅgeśa argues, the full intention of the speaker as conceived by the Prābhākaras and rejected by the Naiyāyikas. We need to know only that the speaker intends a horse to be the qualificand of the knowledge which he wishes to communicate. Hence it is distinct from the full knowledge resulting from the utterance, 'Saindhava is white'.

PART II
SPECIAL ISSUES

7

SPHOṬA THEORY: EARLY HISTORY AND PATAÑJALI'S VIEW

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF *SPHOṬA*

What is language? The traditional answer of some of the Indian grammarians is that it is *sphoṭa*, the real vehicle of meaning. In fact, the Indian grammarians' theory of *sphoṭa* has been acclaimed as one of the most important contributions to the central problem of general linguistics as well as of philosophy of language. The theory in its rudimentary form maintains that a word or a sentence is *not* just a concatenation made up of different sound units arranged in a particular order, but a single whole, a single symbol which bears a meaning. I have used the words 'just' and 'bears' here purposefully, since at this stage when I am trying to formulate a general idea of *sphoṭa* it is difficult to be more precise than this. The idea of *sphoṭa* was variously formulated by different authors (see below) with different sorts of precision. A simple meaning-bearing symbol, which may be a word or a sentence, is what is called a *sphoṭa*. It is either a word-*sphoṭa* or a sentence-*sphoṭa*, depending on the unit of linguistic sign that is accepted and assigned a whole meaning.

The contrast of the *sphoṭa* is with what may be called the articulated, audible sounds that we use, as we must, in any given linguistic discourse. The audible sounds, the 'noisy' realities, are regarded in this theory as the means by which the symbol, the relevant *sphoṭa*, is revealed or made public. The implication of this skeletal theory is that language is what is revealed or made public to another person by the 'noisy realities', not the 'noisy realities' themselves. When we comprehend bits of a language we comprehend the meaning they convey, but such comprehension of the meaning can only arise through our comprehension of the *sphoṭa*. Sounds are as inessential

as the black marks (writings) on papers, although our understanding must start from our recognizing the sounds or the black marks.

The etymological meaning of the term *sphoṭa* might have some significance. A later writer, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, has derived it from the root '*sphuṭ*' which means 'to burst'. Nāgeśa has glossed 'bursts' as 'is revealed'. Hence the derivative meaning of *sphoṭa* is: that from which the meaning bursts forth, i.e. is revealed (Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, 1956 edn, 5). Mādhava (who predates Nāgeśa) in his *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha* has given the following explanation of the etymology: 'bursts' means 'is made explicit'; therefore *sphoṭa* means what is made explicit (*vyaj*) by letters on the one hand, and what, being made explicit, makes the meaning explicit on the other hand. Thus, the *sphoṭa* is what, in being itself revealed by letters or sounds, conveys the meaning to the hearer (Mādhava, 1924 edn, 300). A modern scholar, John Brough, has put it cryptically, 'The *Sphoṭa* is simply the linguistic sign in its aspect of meaning-bearers' (Brough, 1951, 33). Some Indologists described the *sphoṭa* as a 'mysterious entity' (Keith, 1928, 387; De, 1925, II, p. 180). This must be due to the fact that Bhartṛhari's general philosophy associated the concept of *brahman*, the ultimate being, with the essence of speech (*śabdatattva*) and *sphoṭa*. Bhartṛhari even used the term *śabda* as a synonym of *sphoṭa*. Influenced by Bhartṛhari, some modern scholars described *sphoṭa* as 'not a sound or a conglomerate of sound' but 'unanalysable units which make up the linguistic reality a speaker has in his intellect and whereby he communicates' (Cardona, 1976, 301).

II. EARLY HISTORY

It is by no means clear whether Pāṇini knew about the theory of *sphoṭa* in any admissible form. His *Aṣṭādhyāyī* bears no evidence of it except an enigmatic reference to an early grammarian by the name of Sphoṭāyana in rule 6.1.123 '*avaṅ sphoṭāyanasya*'. Haradatta, one of the Pāṇinīyas belonging probably to the 10th century AD, speculated that this Sphoṭāyana was the propounder of the *sphoṭa* doctrine. Haradatta made this comment in his *Padamañjarī* under Pāṇini's rule 6.1.123. Even Nāgeśabhaṭṭa followed Haradatta in this regard and concluded in his *Sphoṭavāda* (Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, 1956 edn, 102) that the *sphoṭa* doctrine was held by sage Sphoṭāyana. Yāska has quoted another cryptic sentence and ascribed it to a scholar called Audumbarāyaṇa (the relative chronology between Pāṇini and Yāska is how-

ever uncertain): *Indriya-nityaṃ vacanam*, 'speech or language is eternal in the faculties' (Yāska, 1918 edn, 1.1). It is explained as stating that a sentence is actually in the mental faculties of the language-users, the speaker and the hearer. A similar view is supposed to have been held by Vārtākṣa, as Bhartṛhari informs us (Bhartṛhari, 1965 edn, II.347). Not much is known about these two authors. Brough has conjectured that the forerunner of Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭa* theory was probably this view of Audumbarāyaṇa mentioned by Yāska (Brough, 1951, 73). In short, the evidence of a primitive *sphoṭa* theory is practically non-existent. Pāṇini has given us a personal name and Yāska has given a succinct quotation. But they do not take us very far. Another speculation is that Vyāḍi, a great grammarian and probably a contemporary of Pāṇini, wrote a book called *Saṃgraha* (frequently referred to by later grammarians such as Bhartṛhari, but the work is irretrievably lost to us), and in it he might have first discussed the *sphoṭa* theory in its rudimentary form. However, we cannot attach much significance to this conjecture.

III. PATAÑJALI'S VIEW

Patañjali at one place says that *sphoṭa* is the 'speech' or 'language' (*śabda*) while the noise or sound (*dhvani*) is a quality (a feature) of the speech (language). It is explained that the 'noisy' element in language, the audible part, can be soft or loud or long or short, but the *sphoṭa* is what remains constant or the same, unaffected by the peculiarities of individual speakers. For Patañjali, a single letter or 'sound' (*varṇa*) such as *k*, *p*, or a fixed sound-series or letter-series, can be a *sphoṭa*. The idea is that the variability due to utterance by different speakers in different tempos belongs to the audible part while the invariant sound-pattern is what is called *sphoṭa*. The *sphoṭa* is thus a unit of sound, a single letter or a letter-series. A sound-series can be analysed as a succession of sound-units, and therefore it has a constant 'size' or a fixed temporal dimension determined by the number of units. This notion of *sphoṭa* is different from that of the later grammarian, for whom *sphoṭa* is a partless (whole) entity and hence unanalysable.

Under Pāṇini's rule 1.1.70, Patañjali gives an example to illustrate his distinction between the 'noise' (sound) and *sphoṭa*. When a drum is being struck, one drum-beat may travel twenty feet, another thirty, another forty; but the *sphoṭa* has a definite 'size' (intensity). Its increase in length or intensity is caused by the actualized noise. He says here

that the letters (even a single letter) have a fixed nature (*avasthīta*) but the style of delivering them through speech-organs (*vṛtti*) depends upon the speaker. It may be that this distinction was originally enunciated as the 'two faces' of language by the great teacher Vyāḍi, presumably a contemporary of Pāṇini. His work *Saṃgraha*, as I have noted already, has not survived. A verse quoted in *Vākyapadīẏa* (I.77) by Bhartṛhari has been ascribed to Vyāḍi by commentators. If this is authentic then Vyāḍi apparently distinguished between *prākṛta-dhvani* 'original sound' and *vaikṛta-dhvani* 'transformed sound'. The verse says that while the 'original sound' is what causes our perception or grasping of the letter, the 'transformed sound' accounts for the differences in style of utterance (*vṛtti*), speech, loudness, etc. This 'original'/'transformed' distinction of speech found in Vyāḍi might have crystallized into the *sphoṭa-dhvani* distinction in Patañjali. The *sphoṭa* theory of the later grammarians (e.g. Bhartṛhari) was, however, very different.

According to the Mīmāṃsakas, the letters (*varṇas*) or sound-units are permanent, and the permanent sound-units should be distinguished from the actual instances of their utterance. When uttered, the quality of being fast, medium or slow will be perceived but such variations do not belong to the permanent sound-units. The sounds that are produced and heard by agents are only means of revealing the permanent sound-units. This Mīmāṃsā view might also have influenced Patañjali's view. The modern distinction between what is called the phonemes and the objective or 'perceived' sounds may have some relevance with Patañjali's theory of *sphoṭa* and *dhvani*. The Naiyāyikas, however, held a different view. For them, sound-units are not permanent, as the Mīmāṃsakas believed, but they are produced (*kārya*) and therefore impermanent. They are regarded as particulars, i.e., particularized instances of sound-universals. Thus an instance of sound-universal *k* (or *ka-tva jāti*) is given in an utterance of *k* by a speaker. This was very much like a type-token distinction. But the Naiyāyikas operated with a broader category of *jāti-vyakti* 'universal-particular' distinction. Hence the almost virtual identity of two or more uttered *k*'s is explained away by the Naiyāyikas as follows: our false awareness of their identity is caused by the excessive similarity of the instances where the universal sound *ka-tva* inheres. One might add that the refinement of type-token distinction did not emerge as a clear alternative from the rather ontological nature of the 'universal-particular' distinction of the Naiyāyikas. In any case, since the *sphoṭa-*

dhvani distinction of the grammarians is presented as a rival theory, we would be well advised not to conflate it with the type-token distinction with which we are familiar today. Coming back to the Nyāya view, we have to say that according to it the meaning of a word (since it is only a combination of sound-atoms uttered at consecutive moments) is presented to the mind of the listener by the last sound heard, *aided* by the memory-impressions of all the preceding sounds. Since isolated sound-atoms cannot individually present the meaning, they must do it jointly, and for that purpose they must be 'perceived' or cognized together as a whole. Technically it is said that they must have 'togetherness' (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) in a single cognitive episode. The requirement is fulfilled when the perception of the last sound is aided (qualified) by the accumulated impression of the preceding sounds heard previously in sequence. Hence it is said that this 'qualified' perception (burdened with the memory impressions in the described fashion) presents the meaning of the word.

This Nyāya view of language was admittedly unsatisfactory. It did not explain why or how meaning is understood from a word or a sentence. For if these meaning-bearing units were simply groups of sequentially uttered sound-atoms, they would lack unity and hence a unified meaning could not be conveyed by them. Neither did it explain how these units could be simultaneously grasped in our cognition. To talk about the perception of the last uttered sound aided by the memory impressions of the others is only to reveal the poverty of this theory's explanatory power. The Naiyāyikas, however, believe in the 'whole-part' ontology where the whole is a new creation, distinct from the parts together. Hence for them, the word may be a new unity created by the individual sounds, and when the last sound is heard, the whole word may be recalled into memory. The grammarians' or the linguists' explanation assumes that we have either the word or the sentence as a unity, two separate, single meaning-bearing units. The service of the *sphoṭa* doctrine has been requisitioned for this purpose. One of the implications of the doctrine is to posit a set of new *linguistic* entities as individual meaning-bearing units.

Both the Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṃsakas were anti-*sphoṭa* theorists. They defined a word as the aggregate of the letters or sounds and held a similar theory about the meaning: it is conveyed by the last sound or letter aided by the impressions produced in the mind by the utterance of preceding letters or sounds. The Mīmāṃsakas however had a different ontological theory about sound which included

linguistic sounds. Unlike the Naiyāyikas, who believed sounds to be momentary realities, i.e., those that are destroyed after being produced, the Mīmāṃsakas held that the letters or sounds are permanent entities incapable of being produced and destroyed; they are only revealed or made explicit when our vocal organ is active and one part strikes against the other. This again does not invoke the *jāti-vyakti* 'universal-particular' distinction but appeals to a different causal notion, according to which a set of (causal) factors may operate together so that a permanent entity, inexplicitly residing in the physical entities, will be made *explicit* (amenable to human perceptions) only temporarily. When the factors cease to operate, the entity becomes again *implicit*. This requires that in our vocabulary of predicates, 'sound is produced' should be replaced by 'sound is manifested' all throughout. The Mīmāṃsakas further held that the memory impressions belonging to the hearer of the sound sequence uttered by the speaker would also possess a special power to convey the meaning of the word or sentence. These memory impressions are nothing but the traces left behind in the mind by the momentary perceptual experience of sounds as they are uttered. We infer that such 'traces' (*saṃskāras*) are left behind, and this inference is based upon the fact of our recollection of these past experiences. Such 'traces' are thus somewhat like the dispositional properties of the mind which have the power to generate our recollection. But the Mīmāṃsakas here attribute further power to such 'traces'—the power to convey the meaning of the word concerned. Critics would say that this would be an unnecessary redundancy, a repugnant consequence of the theory.

Another interesting distinction between the Naiyāyikas and the Mīmāṃsakas is this. For the former, the relationship between word and meaning is established only by *samaya* 'convention', i.e. the convention chosen by the first language-users of the community, or the *original* language-user, God at the beginning of Creation. For the Mīmāṃsakas, however, the word-meaning relationship is 'given' to us, it is *autpattika*, 'natural and uncreated', *apauruṣeya*, 'impersonal'—not created by any person (nor even by god, for there is no creator god, according to the Mīmāṃsā). Convention discovers language, does not create it. In this regard, the Mīmāṃsakas were very closely related to the grammarians. For Kātyāyana, who wrote *Vārttika* on Pāṇini's grammar in the 3rd century BC, stated that all three—the word, what is meant by it and their relationship—are *siddha*, 'natural'

or 'uncreated'. But the Mīmāṃsakas did not accept a word or a sentence as a single indivisible unit having no time sequence as the later grammarians did. The Mīmāṃsakas opposed the *sphoṭa* doctrine, and held that words are composite entities (not wholes), composed of letters or sounds. But they agreed with the Naiyāyikas that the meaning is conveyed by the last sound or letter aided by the impressions, produced in the mind, of the preceding letters.

The linguists or the grammarians found both the Mīmāmsā and the Nyāya theories of word or 'speech' unsatisfactory. They believed that the uttered word must be distinguished from the physical reality of the sequential utterances of letters or sounds. This distinction was captured by their *sphoṭa-dhvani* distinction. But there were several theories in olden days about how this distinction was to be spelt out and what exactly would be the nature of *sphoṭa*. Bhartṛhari discussed some of these earlier theories and in course of such discussion he established his own view about the distinction, which became very influential among the later grammarians.

8

BHARTṚHARI'S VIEW OF *SPHOṬA*

I

The *sphoṭa* doctrine has been most prominently associated with Bhartṛhari. But scholars have held different views about the exact significance of this concept in Bhartṛhari's thought. The situation is further complicated by the fact that later grammarians attribute a much crystallized and ostensibly different doctrine of *sphoṭa* not only to Bhartṛhari but also to Patañjali.

Early Indologists (Keith, 1928, 387; De, 1925, 180) described *sphoṭa* as a mysterious or mystical entity, and this was probably due to its association with Bhartṛhari's notion of *śabda-brahman* or the Eternal Verbum (Sastri, 1959), But this was a mistake. In spite of its metaphysical underpinning which M. Biardeau (1964, 268) rightly emphasized, there is a linguistic treatment of the concept well-documented by Bhartṛhari himself, and other grammarians. Brough (1951, 34) and Kunjunni Raja (1969, 97–148) were right to stress the point that *sphoṭa* was not a mysterious entity. There is another dispute that is connected with it; whether the *sphoṭa* in Bhartṛhari is simply the linguistic sign in its aspect of meaning-bearer (Brough, Kunjunni Raja), or whether it represents an abstract class of sounds sorted out and extracted by the listener from gross matter (Joshi, 1967, 40). Cardona (1976, 302) thinks that Brough's thesis should be modified since Bhartṛhari also talks about *varṇa-sphoṭa*, which refers to a sound unit of the language system, not to any meaning-bearing unit. Iyer (1969, 158–9) has, however, refuted Joshi's rather sweeping comment that Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭa* had nothing to do with the meaning-bearing speech unit. In *Mahābhāṣya-dīpīkā* Bhartṛhari reinterpreted Patañjali's use of the word *śabda*. This was noted by Patañjali as the meaning-bearing element in the *Paspaśā* section. Bhartṛhari glossed this as *sphoṭa* and characterized it as eternal.

II

In *Vākyapadīya* Bhartṛhari clearly develops the threefold doctrine of *sphoṭa* related to letters or phonemes, words and sentences. This is explicitly mentioned in the *Vṛtti*. Sometimes he uses *śabda* and *sphoṭa* interchangeably, which might have been the source of confusion. The *sphoṭa* is further described as partless and indivisible, and as devoid of internal sequence. A *pada-sphoṭa*, i.e. the *sphoṭa* identified as a word, seems to be a meaning-bearing unit. But, for Bhartṛhari, the *vākya-sphoṭa*, i.e. the *sphoṭa* in the form of a sentence, is the most important. In the second *kāṇḍa* of *Vākyapadīya*, he deals with various definitions of the sentence, and finally concludes that a sentence is a sequenceless, partless whole, a *sphoṭa*, that gets 'expressed' or manifested in a sequential and temporary utterance. This is also the primary meaning-bearing element.

For Bhartṛhari, however, this is a wrong term: 'meaning-bearing unit'. *Sphoṭa* is the real substratum, proper linguistic unit, which is identical also with its meaning. Language is not the vehicle of meaning or the conveyor-belt of thought. Thought anchors language and language anchors thought. *Śabdanā*, 'languageing', is thinking; and thought 'vibrates' through language. In this way of looking at things, there cannot be any essential difference between a linguistic unit and its meaning or the thought it conveys. *Sphoṭa* refers to this non-differentiated language-principle. Thus I believe that it is sometimes even incorrect to ask whether *sphoṭa* is or is not the meaning-bearing speech unit in Bhartṛhari's system.

III

Bhartṛhari begins the discussion of his theory by a reference to the distinguishing of the two aspects of language by his predecessors. In verse I.44 he says that the linguists comprehend two types of *śabda* among the *upādāna śabda*, 'linguistic sound': one is the causal root of its manifestation and the other is applied, being manifested, to convey meaning. Of these two, the second is the linguistic unit properly understood, it is the *real* language, while the first is what 'manifests' or 'expresses' it. Bhartṛhari, and following him some later grammarians, related this duality to what I shall call the *sphoṭa-nāda* distinction of language. *Nāda* manifests *sphoṭa* and *sphoṭa* conveys meaning. We need to explain such expressions as 'manifests' and 'expresses'. The *sphoṭa* is an indivisible unit, a partless, sequenceless whole, which is connected with the verbal dispositional ability of the speaker or the

hearer. For the sake of communication between language-users, *sphoṭa* needs to be made explicit, i.e. potentiality must be actualized, so that the hearer may receive it. This cannot be done without *nāda*, the sequential utterances of sound-elements. This is how the *nāda* becomes the causal factor for making *sphoṭa* explicit. The speaker cannot but utter *nāda* in a particular sequence, and *nāda* therefore reveals *sphoṭa* in this way, in sequence, and part by part. It is argued that *sphoṭa* in this way appears (falsely) to have parts and temporal sequences just as the moon reflected in wavy waters appears to be wavy and disintegrated. Since the *nāda* is also identified with the *sphoṭa* certain spurious features are superimposed on the *sphoṭa*.

The sounds uttered by the speaker make the real linguistic units, primarily a sentence, explicit, but this is the *sphoṭa* of the speaker. *Sphoṭa* is also shared by the hearer, and as a result the hearer's *sphoṭa* is 'awakened' by the utterance of the speaker. This awakening of the hearer's *sphoṭa* is what is called the comprehension by the hearer of the sentence uttered. This is what is meant by the claim that the sentence uttered must 'already be present' in the hearer. From the point of view of the speaker, however, the *sphoṭa* 'already present in him' will be the causal condition for the *nāda* or the sequential word utterance, which will convey the *sphoṭa* to the hearer.

The metaphysical view of Bhartṛhari is that whatever is called *śabda*, 'language' and *artha*, 'meaning', 'thought' or 'things meant', are one and undifferentiated in their pre-verbal or potential state. Before the utterance, it is argued, the language along with whatever it conveys or means is like the yolk of a peahen's egg. In that state all the variegated colours of a full-grown peacock lie dormant in potential form. Later these colours are actualized. Similarly in the self of the speaker or hearer, or whoever is gifted with linguistic capability, all the variety and differentiation of linguistic items and their meanings exist as potentialities, and language and thought are identical at that stage. Bhartṛhari even believes that the nature of the self is nothing but identical with the nature of language-thought. This state of complete identity of language and thought is called the *paśyantī* stage of language. Before the proper articulation of the sound-sequence or utterance, there is another 'intermediate' stage (called *madhyamā vāk*) where the language and the thought it conveys are still one and undifferentiated, but at this 'pre-verbal' stage the speaker sees them as differentiable. In other words, he recognizes the verbal part, which he is about to verbalize either to himself or to another, as distinct and

knowledgehood. In order to avoid the Gettier-like counter-examples to the early definition of knowledge found in the Indian tradition, Navya-nyāya, following Gaṅgeśa, may resolve to take any *true* belief to be knowledge, i.e., knowledge *simpliciter*. The question of justification arises, in this view, only at the second level when one tries to ascertain (i.e. to know) the knowledgehood of the acquired belief. According to Nyāya, to know and to know that one knows are two distinct events, caused by two distinct sets of causal conditions. The second-level knowledge, i.e. the knowledge of knowledge that *p*, is usually a sort of an implicit inference which immediately follows the episode of knowledge *simpliciter*. The basis of this inference will be an evidence, and this takes the role of the so-called justification. Hence in most 'Gettier' cases, where a *true* belief has been acquired but through a *wrong* route, although there is some justification for the belief, it may be regarded as knowledge *simpliciter* on this view. This seems to go against the generally accepted Western 'linguistic' insight, according to which the 'Gettier' examples are regarded as counter-examples, i.e. non-knowledge, although they are all true beliefs and happen to have some justification. In the particular Navya-nyāya view, in the case of knowledge by testimony, if all the necessary causal factors co-operate and no inhibiting factors are present then there will arise true belief, i.e. knowledge, in the hearer in all such cases, although at the next moment, when the hearer is about to embark upon the venture of knowing whether he has had knowledge, doubt will infect the attitude and destroy the previous lack of uncertainty. Lack of uncertainty is constitutive of the previous attitude of true belief (and hence it was claimed to be 'knowledge' or *pramā*). Udayana said (*NTP*) that we all have a strong natural disposition (cf. *samutkaṭa-vāsanā*) to believe *truly*, i.e. to have knowledge, so our first gut reaction is not to look for falsifiers. (Compare it with, not gullibility, but the Davidson-like point that 'believes truly' is generally implicated by 'believes'; see Davidson, 1975, 166.)

Note that at the second level, Gettier-like counter-examples may be easily detected and excluded. Following Vācaspati, we may first claim that not all cases of cognition or true belief when they arise need justification, for in many 'familiar' cases we act automatically without even unconsciously asking for justification. In the 'unfamiliar' cases or in cases where doubt has crept in, we generally use two types of inference to establish knowledgehood or truth of the occurrent belief. One is based upon 'confirmatory behaviour' as evidence, and

the other upon 'likeness with the familiar' as evidence. Another type may use 'assurance about the operation of adequate causal factors' as evidence. In any case, if the inference is right, it will establish knowledgehood and the required *justification* will be given. This means that the person now not only has knowledge (an occurrent true belief) but also has *a right to be sure*. He is now entitled to *call* his cognition a case of knowledge. In some (Gettier-like) counter-examples, if the resulting belief is true, it would be knowledge, according to Gaṅgeśa, and if untrue, it would not be knowledge, although in either case the person may go on to *call* (cf. *vyavahāra*) it knowledge. For, according to the view we are expounding, speech-behaviour that something is *X* (utterance 'it is *X*') ordinarily presupposes awareness of awareness that the thing is *X*. I cannot rightly say 'this is a camel' unless I am aware that I know that this is a camel. If, in some Gettier-like cases, I am wrong in my inference about the knowledgehood of the given occurrent belief (for the evidence may be a pseudo-evidence), then I am mistaken about the truth of my belief—and this is in accord with Nyāya fallibilism: not all knowledge-claims can be sustained.

IX. KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPEAKER'S QUALITIES

We may note here another peculiarity. Both Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā accept testimony as a distinct source of knowledge, not perception or inference. But the Mīmāṃsakas take the testimony of scriptural statements as knowledge, for they inform us about things (heaven, afterlife, moral goodness, etc.) which we have no other way of knowing. Hence they are informative, and not repetitions of what we know already. But ordinary statements do not yield knowledge in this sense, for they require that the speaker be trustworthy. But if the hearer must have the knowledge that the speaker is trustworthy or reliable with regard to the knowledge contained in the utterance '*a* is *b*', then by the same token he should know already that *a* is *b*. Hence his final cognition from the said utterance lacks novelty, i.e., is not informative, for it repeats what he has learnt already when he learnt about the trustworthiness of the speaker.

Gaṅgeśa says that the knowledge of trustworthiness of the speaker, for this very reason, should not be counted as a causal factor for our knowledge by testimony. An ordinary utterance contains the 'freshness' condition, for it informs, and the hearer obtains knowledge (provided the other conditions are fulfilled) directly without waiting

for the knowledge of the trustworthiness of the speaker. Besides, it is almost impossible to know that the speaker in this particular case is trustworthy before the hearer can verify that what he cognized was knowledge. Lack of doubt about the speaker's credibility would be enough for the required verbal knowledge to arise.

We can now take up the second issue. How can the claim be justified, that we will *first* have a knowledge-claim generated in us by the utterance even when we already know that the speaker is a compulsive liar (or a compulsive joker)? This might support the claim of the Mīmāṃsakas that the knowledge of the reliability and sincerity of the speaker is a necessary causal factor to avoid the possibility of false belief being generated by such utterances in the hearer. For otherwise we will have a lingering doubt from the beginning, even when the sentence is uttered, about whether what it says is true or not. Gaṅgeśa denies this point. For him, consideration of the speaker's qualities, reliability, sincerity or competence, might be needed at the second level, to determine knowledgehood of the knowledge-claim, but not at the first instant.

Our doubting attitude about whether what the speaker says is true or not, whether there is such a state of affairs or not, cannot at the first instant *stop* the occurrence of the knowledge-claim but rather, paradoxically enough, helps to generate such knowledge. For both inferential knowledge and perceptual knowledge do arise in the face of such doubt. For instance, seeing and doubting from a distance whether the tall man is my friend or not, I approach and see that he is my friend. Similarly, doubt is also what motivates someone to look for the evidence which will, by inference, remove the doubt one way or another. In fact, Nyāya has sometimes said that doubt is the psychological factor for inference to arise (cf. *saṃśaya-pakṣatā*). The same will be the case with testimony (Gaṅgeśa, 1892–1901 edn., 154–6).

The opponent may argue further: Well, the said doubt may not be the *knowledge-stopper*, but because a sentence may very well be, and frequently is, composed (and uttered) even when it lacks a real state of affairs as its reference, the certainty of the verbal knowledge is imperilled nevertheless by this overwhelming possibility. Gaṅgeśa says in reply that such uncertainties may creep in only after a belief or a knowledge-claim, by testimony, i.e. from the utterance, has already occurred. Such uncertainty presupposes the prior presence of a knowledge-claim.

I shall conclude with a comment on the notion of the speaker's intention. In the case of ambiguous utterances, Nyāya admits that knowledge of the speaker's intention is a necessary factor for knowledge by testimony. Consider our example: 'Bring Saindhava'. The question arises, 'Will not knowledge of this type of the speaker's intention render the emerging knowledge from the utterance superfluous or repetitious?' For the Prābhākaras argued that if the knowledge of the speaker's intention is a necessary causal factor (as it should be) in the case of ordinary (non-scriptural, non-Vedic) utterances, then such knowledge of the speaker's intention to communicate that *A* is *B* will already contain the knowledge that *A* is *B*, and hence the resulting belief would be repetitious and redundant, and not knowledge. The Nyāya answer however is that the knowledge of the speaker's intention in the above case, derivable from context, etc., simply tells that the particular word refers to salt. The knowledge of the full-fledged fact that the speaker's utterance intends to communicate is not needed beforehand.

Suppose the utterance is 'Saindhava is white'. The speaker intends: a horse is white. For such disambiguation, we do not need to know his full intention. We need only to know that the speaker is prompted by a sort of knowledge where he intends a horse to be a qualificand. But the emergent verbal knowledge would be technically different. It would be a case of knowledge where the qualificandhood is resident in a horse and is *conditioned* by the qualifierhood resident in whiteness.

There is a touch of technical subtlety here, which I shall briefly describe. The utterance is 'Saindhava is white'. Now a horse may be white as much as salt may be. Hence, faced with such an utterance, the hearer would have no knowledge by testimony generated in him. Why? He cannot decide one way or the other; he does not have a *standard* interpretation. This is why I am eager to add the notion of a *standard* interpretation in the beginning. Now here it seems that the sufficiency of the three jointly necessary conditions is jeopardized. We need to add the knowledge of the speaker's intention to make it sufficient. But this is not, Gaṅgeśa argues, the full intention of the speaker as conceived by the Prābhākaras and rejected by the Naiyāyikas. We need to know only that the speaker intends a horse to be the qualificand of the knowledge which he wishes to communicate. Hence it is distinct from the full knowledge resulting from the utterance, 'Saindhava is white'.

PART II
SPECIAL ISSUES

7

SPHOṬA THEORY: EARLY HISTORY AND PATAÑJALI'S VIEW

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF *SPHOṬA*

What is language? The traditional answer of some of the Indian grammarians is that it is *sphoṭa*, the real vehicle of meaning. In fact, the Indian grammarians' theory of *sphoṭa* has been acclaimed as one of the most important contributions to the central problem of general linguistics as well as of philosophy of language. The theory in its rudimentary form maintains that a word or a sentence is *not* just a concatenation made up of different sound units arranged in a particular order, but a single whole, a single symbol which bears a meaning. I have used the words 'just' and 'bears' here purposefully, since at this stage when I am trying to formulate a general idea of *sphoṭa* it is difficult to be more precise than this. The idea of *sphoṭa* was variously formulated by different authors (see below) with different sorts of precision. A simple meaning-bearing symbol, which may be a word or a sentence, is what is called a *sphoṭa*. It is either a word-*sphoṭa* or a sentence-*sphoṭa*, depending on the unit of linguistic sign that is accepted and assigned a whole meaning.

The contrast of the *sphoṭa* is with what may be called the articulated, audible sounds that we use, as we must, in any given linguistic discourse. The audible sounds, the 'noisy' realities, are regarded in this theory as the means by which the symbol, the relevant *sphoṭa*, is revealed or made public. The implication of this skeletal theory is that language is what is revealed or made public to another person by the 'noisy realities', not the 'noisy realities' themselves. When we comprehend bits of a language we comprehend the meaning they convey, but such comprehension of the meaning can only arise through our comprehension of the *sphoṭa*. Sounds are as inessential

as the black marks (writings) on papers, although our understanding must start from our recognizing the sounds or the black marks.

The etymological meaning of the term *sphoṭa* might have some significance. A later writer, Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, has derived it from the root '*sphuṭ*' which means 'to burst'. Nāgeśa has glossed 'bursts' as 'is revealed'. Hence the derivative meaning of *sphoṭa* is: that from which the meaning bursts forth, i.e. is revealed (Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, 1956 edn, 5). Mādhava (who predates Nāgeśa) in his *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha* has given the following explanation of the etymology: 'bursts' means 'is made explicit'; therefore *sphoṭa* means what is made explicit (*vyaj*) by letters on the one hand, and what, being made explicit, makes the meaning explicit on the other hand. Thus, the *sphoṭa* is what, in being itself revealed by letters or sounds, conveys the meaning to the hearer (Mādhava, 1924 edn, 300). A modern scholar, John Brough, has put it cryptically, 'The *Sphoṭa* is simply the linguistic sign in its aspect of meaning-bearers' (Brough, 1951, 33). Some Indologists described the *sphoṭa* as a 'mysterious entity' (Keith, 1928, 387; De, 1925, II, p. 180). This must be due to the fact that Bhartṛhari's general philosophy associated the concept of *brahman*, the ultimate being, with the essence of speech (*śabdatattva*) and *sphoṭa*. Bhartṛhari even used the term *śabda* as a synonym of *sphoṭa*. Influenced by Bhartṛhari, some modern scholars described *sphoṭa* as 'not a sound or a conglomerate of sound' but 'unanalysable units which make up the linguistic reality a speaker has in his intellect and whereby he communicates' (Cardona, 1976, 301).

II. EARLY HISTORY

It is by no means clear whether Pāṇini knew about the theory of *sphoṭa* in any admissible form. His *Aṣṭādhyāyī* bears no evidence of it except an enigmatic reference to an early grammarian by the name of Sphoṭāyana in rule 6.1.123 '*avaṅ sphoṭāyanasya*'. Haradatta, one of the Pāṇinīyas belonging probably to the 10th century AD, speculated that this Sphoṭāyana was the propounder of the *sphoṭa* doctrine. Haradatta made this comment in his *Padamañjarī* under Pāṇini's rule 6.1.123. Even Nāgeśabhaṭṭa followed Haradatta in this regard and concluded in his *Sphoṭavāda* (Nāgeśabhaṭṭa, 1956 edn, 102) that the *sphoṭa* doctrine was held by sage Sphoṭāyana. Yāska has quoted another cryptic sentence and ascribed it to a scholar called Audumbarāyaṇa (the relative chronology between Pāṇini and Yāska is how-

ever uncertain): *Indriya-nityaṃ vacanam*, 'speech or language is eternal in the faculties' (Yāska, 1918 edn, 1.1). It is explained as stating that a sentence is actually in the mental faculties of the language-users, the speaker and the hearer. A similar view is supposed to have been held by Vārtākṣa, as Bhartṛhari informs us (Bhartṛhari, 1965 edn, II.347). Not much is known about these two authors. Brough has conjectured that the forerunner of Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭa* theory was probably this view of Audumbarāyaṇa mentioned by Yāska (Brough, 1951, 73). In short, the evidence of a primitive *sphoṭa* theory is practically non-existent. Pāṇini has given us a personal name and Yāska has given a succinct quotation. But they do not take us very far. Another speculation is that Vyāḍi, a great grammarian and probably a contemporary of Pāṇini, wrote a book called *Saṃgraha* (frequently referred to by later grammarians such as Bhartṛhari, but the work is irretrievably lost to us), and in it he might have first discussed the *sphoṭa* theory in its rudimentary form. However, we cannot attach much significance to this conjecture.

III. PATAÑJALI'S VIEW

Patañjali at one place says that *sphoṭa* is the 'speech' or 'language' (*śabda*) while the noise or sound (*dhvani*) is a quality (a feature) of the speech (language). It is explained that the 'noisy' element in language, the audible part, can be soft or loud or long or short, but the *sphoṭa* is what remains constant or the same, unaffected by the peculiarities of individual speakers. For Patañjali, a single letter or 'sound' (*varṇa*) such as *k*, *p*, or a fixed sound-series or letter-series, can be a *sphoṭa*. The idea is that the variability due to utterance by different speakers in different tempos belongs to the audible part while the invariant sound-pattern is what is called *sphoṭa*. The *sphoṭa* is thus a unit of sound, a single letter or a letter-series. A sound-series can be analysed as a succession of sound-units, and therefore it has a constant 'size' or a fixed temporal dimension determined by the number of units. This notion of *sphoṭa* is different from that of the later grammarian, for whom *sphoṭa* is a partless (whole) entity and hence unanalysable.

Under Pāṇini's rule 1.1.70, Patañjali gives an example to illustrate his distinction between the 'noise' (sound) and *sphoṭa*. When a drum is being struck, one drum-beat may travel twenty feet, another thirty, another forty; but the *sphoṭa* has a definite 'size' (intensity). Its increase in length or intensity is caused by the actualized noise. He says here

that the letters (even a single letter) have a fixed nature (*avasthīta*) but the style of delivering them through speech-organs (*vṛtti*) depends upon the speaker. It may be that this distinction was originally enunciated as the 'two faces' of language by the great teacher Vyāḍi, presumably a contemporary of Pāṇini. His work *Saṃgraha*, as I have noted already, has not survived. A verse quoted in *Vākyapadīya* (I.77) by Bhartṛhari has been ascribed to Vyāḍi by commentators. If this is authentic then Vyāḍi apparently distinguished between *prākṛta-dhvani* 'original sound' and *vaikṛta-dhvani* 'transformed sound'. The verse says that while the 'original sound' is what causes our perception or grasping of the letter, the 'transformed sound' accounts for the differences in style of utterance (*vṛtti*), speech, loudness, etc. This 'original'/'transformed' distinction of speech found in Vyāḍi might have crystallized into the *sphoṭa-dhvani* distinction in Patañjali. The *sphoṭa* theory of the later grammarians (e.g. Bhartṛhari) was, however, very different.

According to the Mīmāṃsakas, the letters (*varṇas*) or sound-units are permanent, and the permanent sound-units should be distinguished from the actual instances of their utterance. When uttered, the quality of being fast, medium or slow will be perceived but such variations do not belong to the permanent sound-units. The sounds that are produced and heard by agents are only means of revealing the permanent sound-units. This Mīmāṃsā view might also have influenced Patañjali's view. The modern distinction between what is called the phonemes and the objective or 'perceived' sounds may have some relevance with Patañjali's theory of *sphoṭa* and *dhvani*. The Naiyāyikas, however, held a different view. For them, sound-units are not permanent, as the Mīmāṃsakas believed, but they are produced (*kārya*) and therefore impermanent. They are regarded as particulars, i.e., particularized instances of sound-universals. Thus an instance of sound-universal *k* (or *ka-tva jāti*) is given in an utterance of *k* by a speaker. This was very much like a type-token distinction. But the Naiyāyikas operated with a broader category of *jāti-vyakti* 'universal-particular' distinction. Hence the almost virtual identity of two or more uttered *k*'s is explained away by the Naiyāyikas as follows: our false awareness of their identity is caused by the excessive similarity of the instances where the universal sound *ka-tva* inheres. One might add that the refinement of type-token distinction did not emerge as a clear alternative from the rather ontological nature of the 'universal-particular' distinction of the Naiyāyikas. In any case, since the *sphoṭa-*

dhvani distinction of the grammarians is presented as a rival theory, we would be well advised not to conflate it with the type-token distinction with which we are familiar today. Coming back to the Nyāya view, we have to say that according to it the meaning of a word (since it is only a combination of sound-atoms uttered at consecutive moments) is presented to the mind of the listener by the last sound heard, *aided* by the memory-impressions of all the preceding sounds. Since isolated sound-atoms cannot individually present the meaning, they must do it jointly, and for that purpose they must be 'perceived' or cognized together as a whole. Technically it is said that they must have 'togetherness' (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) in a single cognitive episode. The requirement is fulfilled when the perception of the last sound is aided (qualified) by the accumulated impression of the preceding sounds heard previously in sequence. Hence it is said that this 'qualified' perception (burdened with the memory impressions in the described fashion) presents the meaning of the word.

This Nyāya view of language was admittedly unsatisfactory. It did not explain why or how meaning is understood from a word or a sentence. For if these meaning-bearing units were simply groups of sequentially uttered sound-atoms, they would lack unity and hence a unified meaning could not be conveyed by them. Neither did it explain how these units could be simultaneously grasped in our cognition. To talk about the perception of the last uttered sound aided by the memory impressions of the others is only to reveal the poverty of this theory's explanatory power. The Naiyāyikas, however, believe in the 'whole-part' ontology where the whole is a new creation, distinct from the parts together. Hence for them, the word may be a new unity created by the individual sounds, and when the last sound is heard, the whole word may be recalled into memory. The grammarians' or the linguists' explanation assumes that we have either the word or the sentence as a unity, two separate, single meaning-bearing units. The service of the *sphoṭa* doctrine has been requisitioned for this purpose. One of the implications of the doctrine is to posit a set of new *linguistic* entities as individual meaning-bearing units.

Both the Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṃsakas were anti-*sphoṭa* theorists. They defined a word as the aggregate of the letters or sounds and held a similar theory about the meaning: it is conveyed by the last sound or letter aided by the impressions produced in the mind by the utterance of preceding letters or sounds. The Mīmāṃsakas however had a different ontological theory about sound which included

linguistic sounds. Unlike the Naiyāyikas, who believed sounds to be momentary realities, i.e., those that are destroyed after being produced, the Mīmāṃsakas held that the letters or sounds are permanent entities incapable of being produced and destroyed; they are only revealed or made explicit when our vocal organ is active and one part strikes against the other. This again does not invoke the *jāti-vyakti* 'universal-particular' distinction but appeals to a different causal notion, according to which a set of (causal) factors may operate together so that a permanent entity, inexplicitly residing in the physical entities, will be made *explicit* (amenable to human perceptions) only temporarily. When the factors cease to operate, the entity becomes again *implicit*. This requires that in our vocabulary of predicates, 'sound is produced' should be replaced by 'sound is manifested' all throughout. The Mīmāṃsakas further held that the memory impressions belonging to the hearer of the sound sequence uttered by the speaker would also possess a special power to convey the meaning of the word or sentence. These memory impressions are nothing but the traces left behind in the mind by the momentary perceptual experience of sounds as they are uttered. We infer that such 'traces' (*saṃskāras*) are left behind, and this inference is based upon the fact of our recollection of these past experiences. Such 'traces' are thus somewhat like the dispositional properties of the mind which have the power to generate our recollection. But the Mīmāṃsakas here attribute further power to such 'traces'—the power to convey the meaning of the word concerned. Critics would say that this would be an unnecessary redundancy, a repugnant consequence of the theory.

Another interesting distinction between the Naiyāyikas and the Mīmāṃsakas is this. For the former, the relationship between word and meaning is established only by *samaya* 'convention', i.e. the convention chosen by the first language-users of the community, or the *original* language-user, God at the beginning of Creation. For the Mīmāṃsakas, however, the word-meaning relationship is 'given' to us, it is *autpattika*, 'natural and uncreated', *apauruṣeya*, 'impersonal'—not created by any person (nor even by god, for there is no creator god, according to the Mīmāṃsā). Convention discovers language, does not create it. In this regard, the Mīmāṃsakas were very closely related to the grammarians. For Kātyāyana, who wrote *Vārttika* on Pāṇini's grammar in the 3rd century BC, stated that all three—the word, what is meant by it and their relationship—are *siddha*, 'natural'

or 'uncreated'. But the Mīmāṃsakas did not accept a word or a sentence as a single indivisible unit having no time sequence as the later grammarians did. The Mīmāṃsakas opposed the *sphoṭa* doctrine, and held that words are composite entities (not wholes), composed of letters or sounds. But they agreed with the Naiyāyikas that the meaning is conveyed by the last sound or letter aided by the impressions, produced in the mind, of the preceding letters.

The linguists or the grammarians found both the Mīmāmsā and the Nyāya theories of word or 'speech' unsatisfactory. They believed that the uttered word must be distinguished from the physical reality of the sequential utterances of letters or sounds. This distinction was captured by their *sphoṭa-dhvani* distinction. But there were several theories in olden days about how this distinction was to be spelt out and what exactly would be the nature of *sphoṭa*. Bhartṛhari discussed some of these earlier theories and in course of such discussion he established his own view about the distinction, which became very influential among the later grammarians.

8

BHARTṚHARI'S VIEW OF *SPHOṬA*

I

The *sphoṭa* doctrine has been most prominently associated with Bhartṛhari. But scholars have held different views about the exact significance of this concept in Bhartṛhari's thought. The situation is further complicated by the fact that later grammarians attribute a much crystallized and ostensibly different doctrine of *sphoṭa* not only to Bhartṛhari but also to Patañjali.

Early Indologists (Keith, 1928, 387; De, 1925, 180) described *sphoṭa* as a mysterious or mystical entity, and this was probably due to its association with Bhartṛhari's notion of *śabda-brahman* or the Eternal Verbum (Sastri, 1959), But this was a mistake. In spite of its metaphysical underpinning which M. Biardeau (1964, 268) rightly emphasized, there is a linguistic treatment of the concept well-documented by Bhartṛhari himself, and other grammarians. Brough (1951, 34) and Kunjunni Raja (1969, 97–148) were right to stress the point that *sphoṭa* was not a mysterious entity. There is another dispute that is connected with it; whether the *sphoṭa* in Bhartṛhari is simply the linguistic sign in its aspect of meaning-bearer (Brough, Kunjunni Raja), or whether it represents an abstract class of sounds sorted out and extracted by the listener from gross matter (Joshi, 1967, 40). Cardona (1976, 302) thinks that Brough's thesis should be modified since Bhartṛhari also talks about *varṇa-sphoṭa*, which refers to a sound unit of the language system, not to any meaning-bearing unit. Iyer (1969, 158–9) has, however, refuted Joshi's rather sweeping comment that Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭa* had nothing to do with the meaning-bearing speech unit. In *Mahābhāṣya-dīpīkā* Bhartṛhari reinterpreted Patañjali's use of the word *śabda*. This was noted by Patañjali as the meaning-bearing element in the *Paspaśā* section. Bhartṛhari glossed this as *sphoṭa* and characterized it as eternal.

II

In *Vākyapadīya* Bhartṛhari clearly develops the threefold doctrine of *sphoṭa* related to letters or phonemes, words and sentences. This is explicitly mentioned in the *Vṛtti*. Sometimes he uses *śabda* and *sphoṭa* interchangeably, which might have been the source of confusion. The *sphoṭa* is further described as partless and indivisible, and as devoid of internal sequence. A *pada-sphoṭa*, i.e. the *sphoṭa* identified as a word, seems to be a meaning-bearing unit. But, for Bhartṛhari, the *vākya-sphoṭa*, i.e. the *sphoṭa* in the form of a sentence, is the most important. In the second *kāṇḍa* of *Vākyapadīya*, he deals with various definitions of the sentence, and finally concludes that a sentence is a sequenceless, partless whole, a *sphoṭa*, that gets 'expressed' or manifested in a sequential and temporary utterance. This is also the primary meaning-bearing element.

For Bhartṛhari, however, this is a wrong term: 'meaning-bearing unit'. *Sphoṭa* is the real substratum, proper linguistic unit, which is identical also with its meaning. Language is not the vehicle of meaning or the conveyor-belt of thought. Thought anchors language and language anchors thought. *Śabdanā*, 'languageing', is thinking; and thought 'vibrates' through language. In this way of looking at things, there cannot be any essential difference between a linguistic unit and its meaning or the thought it conveys. *Sphoṭa* refers to this non-differentiated language-principle. Thus I believe that it is sometimes even incorrect to ask whether *sphoṭa* is or is not the meaning-bearing speech unit in Bhartṛhari's system.

III

Bhartṛhari begins the discussion of his theory by a reference to the distinguishing of the two aspects of language by his predecessors. In verse I.44 he says that the linguists comprehend two types of *śabda* among the *upādāna śabda*, 'linguistic sound': one is the causal root of its manifestation and the other is applied, being manifested, to convey meaning. Of these two, the second is the linguistic unit properly understood, it is the *real* language, while the first is what 'manifests' or 'expresses' it. Bhartṛhari, and following him some later grammarians, related this duality to what I shall call the *sphoṭa-nāda* distinction of language. *Nāda* manifests *sphoṭa* and *sphoṭa* conveys meaning. We need to explain such expressions as 'manifests' and 'expresses'. The *sphoṭa* is an indivisible unit, a partless, sequenceless whole, which is connected with the verbal dispositional ability of the speaker or the

hearer. For the sake of communication between language-users, *sphoṭa* needs to be made explicit, i.e. potentiality must be actualized, so that the hearer may receive it. This cannot be done without *nāda*, the sequential utterances of sound-elements. This is how the *nāda* becomes the causal factor for making *sphoṭa* explicit. The speaker cannot but utter *nāda* in a particular sequence, and *nāda* therefore reveals *sphoṭa* in this way, in sequence, and part by part. It is argued that *sphoṭa* in this way appears (falsely) to have parts and temporal sequences just as the moon reflected in wavy waters appears to be wavy and disintegrated. Since the *nāda* is also identified with the *sphoṭa* certain spurious features are superimposed on the *sphoṭa*.

The sounds uttered by the speaker make the real linguistic units, primarily a sentence, explicit, but this is the *sphoṭa* of the speaker. *Sphoṭa* is also shared by the hearer, and as a result the hearer's *sphoṭa* is 'awakened' by the utterance of the speaker. This awakening of the hearer's *sphoṭa* is what is called the comprehension by the hearer of the sentence uttered. This is what is meant by the claim that the sentence uttered must 'already be present' in the hearer. From the point of view of the speaker, however, the *sphoṭa* 'already present in him' will be the causal condition for the *nāda* or the sequential word utterance, which will convey the *sphoṭa* to the hearer.

The metaphysical view of Bhartṛhari is that whatever is called *śabda*, 'language' and *artha*, 'meaning', 'thought' or 'things meant', are one and undifferentiated in their pre-verbal or potential state. Before the utterance, it is argued, the language along with whatever it conveys or means is like the yolk of a peahen's egg. In that state all the variegated colours of a full-grown peacock lie dormant in potential form. Later these colours are actualized. Similarly in the self of the speaker or hearer, or whoever is gifted with linguistic capability, all the variety and differentiation of linguistic items and their meanings exist as potentialities, and language and thought are identical at that stage. Bhartṛhari even believes that the nature of the self is nothing but identical with the nature of language-thought. This state of complete identity of language and thought is called the *paśyantī* stage of language. Before the proper articulation of the sound-sequence or utterance, there is another 'intermediate' stage (called *madhyamā vāk*) where the language and the thought it conveys are still one and undifferentiated, but at this 'pre-verbal' stage the speaker sees them as differentiable. In other words, he recognizes the verbal part, which he is about to verbalize either to himself or to another, as distinct and

separable from the *artha*, 'meaning' or 'thought'. This perception impels him to speech which results in the *nāda-sphoṭa* differentiation.

It may be useful to quote here some relevant verses of Bhartṛhari to underline the *sphoṭa-nāda* distinction.

Verse I.44: Linguists (*śabdavidaḥ*) comprehend two types of *śabda* among linguistic *śabda*. One is the *nimitta* of the sound and the other designates the object or meaning.

Commentary: In the sequenceless nature of the speech (*vāk*) both powers, the power to be articulated in sound (audible form) and the power to convey meaning, lie intermixed.

Verse I.46: Just as light/fire (*jyotiḥ*) resides in the *araṇi* stick and (being manifested) becomes the cause for manifesting other objects, *śabda* resides likewise in the MIND (inner faculty, *buddhi*) and (being manifested) becomes separately the cause for manifesting the meaning (as well as itself; added in the commentary).

Verse I.48: Since *nāda* (sound) arises in sequence, *sphoṭa*, which has neither a former nor a latter stage and which is sequenceless (*akrama*), is apprehended (through *nāda*) and appears to be having a sequence as well as parts.

Verse I.49: (Thus, properties of *nāda* are transferred to the *sphoṭa*.) The reflected image (of the moon, for example) although it resides in a separate location, seems to share the operation (i.e. movement of the waves in water) of objects in a separate location; *sphoṭa* being manifested in *nāda* shares the properties of *nāda* in the same way.

Verse I. 52: A figure being grasped by a single awareness is painted on a canvas (part by part) into another complete, unitary figure (for the viewer to grasp it in one sweep). Similarly in *śabda*, too, all these three stages are found.

Verse I. 53: The speaker apprehends beforehand the entire *śabda*, with regard to which the hearer's awareness also arises.

Verse I. 55: Just as fire has both powers—the power to be the object of manifestation and the agent of manifestation—all *śabdas* individually have both powers likewise. (Fire in manifesting itself manifests others; *śabda*, too, in manifesting itself manifests others.)

Verse I. 56: (For this reason) *śabdas* do not convey meaning without themselves being the objects of our awareness. They cannot manifest

or reveal the meanings simply by their existence, if they (themselves) remain unapprehended.

Verse I. 57: Hence, when from indistinct utterance, the form of the *śabda* is not apprehended, one asks 'what did he say?' But when the senses reveal objects, those senses do not need to be apprehended themselves.

IV

How is the *sphoṭa-nāda* distinction comprehended? Or, we may rephrase the question: how is 'language' comprehended? We have seen that Bhartṛhari has posited three stages of language or speech. The first stage, where there is complete identity of language and thought, is called the *paśyantī* stage; we can call it 'non-verbal'. The 'intermediate' stage, where despite the identity of thought and language their difference is discernible, can be called the 'pre-verbal' stage. And the third, the *vaikharī* stage, can be called the 'verbal' stage. This is how the matter stands from the speaker's point of view. But how does the hearer comprehend it? Bhartṛhari states four different views on this point.

According to some, *sphoṭa* is cognized as identical with the sound or *nāda*. One who grasps the *nāda* grasps the *sphoṭa* at the same time. Since basically the sound or *nāda* is identical with the *sphoṭa*, and they are so to say only two sides of the same coin, the grasping of one cannot be distinguished from that of the other. In other words, he who has not grasped one has not grasped the other. The commentator has supplied a beautiful analogy to elucidate the point. When a piece of crystal is placed near a red *japā* flower, the piece (of crystal) cannot be grasped or perceived without the colour red, for it now certainly appears red because of the proximity of the red flower. The *sphoṭa* is likewise comprehended along with the *nāda* that manifests it, one grasps the bits of language as sound or utterance, i.e. the *sphoṭa* as the *nāda*. It is not clear whether this analogy can be taken to imply that the *nāda* is only a superimposed feature of the *sphoṭa*, the real language. For, the piece of crystal is only apparently red due to the conditional superimposition; in reality it is colourless. If the implicit idea is that the *nāda* or sound is an inessential, conditionally superimposed, feature of the *real language* or the *sphoṭa*, then I do not think this would be in exact accord with the doctrine of Bhartṛhari. Perhaps the analogy is not to be taken too far. It may be that simply the identification of the *nāda* with the *sphoṭa* is what is implied. In that case, this may well be

Bhartṛhari's own view. The analogy between a piece of crystal and a bit of language was again used by Bhartṛhari in *kāṇḍa* 3 of *Vākyapadīya*. But the purpose of that anology was probably different. It was to illustrate a point of Bhartṛhari's semantics. Objects meant by bits of language are only created by the language, for language is autonomous just as a piece of crystal is believed to be autonomous (according to the pre-scientific theory of light) in the sense that it 'reflects' objects by according an autonomous status to them (the reflector modifies the object in its own way). This analogy has been used with great ingenuity by R. Herzberger in her exposition of Bhartṛhari's semantics (Herzberger, 1986, 50–3). However, in the context of our comprehension of the *sphoṭa* through *nāda*, the 'crystal' analogy might serve a slightly different purpose. We grasp the *sphoṭa* as reflected in the *nāda*, and as almost identical with the *nāda* itself, just as we grasp redness as presented by the piece of crystal, not in any other way.

Bhartṛhari refers to a second view held by some: that the comprehension of the *sphoṭa* does not require the comprehension of sounds or *nāda* as a condition. A tentative argument is given in favour of this view. We know that when we cognize an object, say a pot, through visual perception, we do so through the instrumentality of the faculty of vision, the eye, and it is an established fact that we do not need to know the properties or features of the eye-organ itself. The fact that we *have* the eye-organ is enough, for this only is relevant for the knowledge of the object. Similarly we comprehend the *sphoṭa* through the instrumentality of *nāda*, sounds. Patañjali (see ch. 7) has contended that sound is the attribute of the *sphoṭa*. Now when the *sphoṭa* is presented through sounds, we comprehend it right away even prior to our cognition of all the sound-symbols, though the latter is indicative of the former. In other words, in this view the cognition of the sounds themselves is not needed prior to our cognition of the *sphoṭa*. Bhartṛhari has criticized this view saying that as long as the sounds are uttered they are also directly perceived by our sense of hearing. Hence it is impossible to comprehend the *sphoṭa* without comprehending the sounds. The view, as it stands, is indeed peculiar. Perhaps the upholders of this view were unconsciously arguing in favour of a distinction between sound-tokens and sound-types, and they accordingly wanted to say that we do not need to cognize the sound-types over and above the sound-tokens prior to our comprehension of the *sphoṭa*. Sometimes, it may be pointed out, we comprehend the *sphoṭa* even when only a part of the relevant sound-token is heard.

The third and fourth views mentioned by Bhartṛhari were also obscure. There were a few thinkers who apparently believed in the metaphysical existence of the *sphoṭa* but maintained that it could not be amenable to perception. The reason adduced further confounds the issue, for it is said that the distance that separates the *sphoṭa* from the cognizing hearer makes the *sphoṭa* imperceptible. The upholders of the fourth view understood the matter in another way. Distance cannot make the *sphoṭa* imperceptible but can render it rather indistinguishable. In other words, since distance does not remove the object from the field of perception, it can render the *sphoṭa*, like an object at a distance, indistinguishable from the environment. Thus, we fail to perceive *sphoṭa* as a distinct entity. Bhartṛhari obviously rejected these views, and it is difficult to make sense of their notion of *sphoṭa*.

There is an obvious problem when we say that the sequential and atomic *nāda*-units in combination reveal or manifest the indivisible, impartite *sphoṭa*. The problem is similar to the problem of perception: how do the parts present the whole? If they present it *partially*, then the whole will never be presented in one sweep and this will cast doubt upon the contention about the reality of the whole over and above the constituents out of which it is formed. For the grammarians, the *sphoṭa* is a whole and it is a metaphysical entity, neither an object of construction, nor an abstraction. So the question arises: how do we perceive it from the utterance of a divisible and sequential sound-stretch? How is the unity perceived through the presentation of plurality? Thus by stating that the sound-stretch manifests the *sphoṭa* we do not explain much or answer the crucial question: how? For surely separate efforts are required to produce different sounds and they are produced in succession. At which point exactly is the unity that we call *sphoṭa* comprehended? If the unity is cognized at every instant from the beginning, then there is the fault of repetition and redundancy. If it is by the last (utterance of the) sound-unit then all the preceding units (or their utterances) are superfluous, for they have been destroyed at the time of comprehension.

Bhartṛhari answers this objection as follows: For the sake of convenience, let us use the illustration of a word-*sphoṭa* '*gauḥ*' (the cow). There is a unity here, the word. But the four sound-units or letters, *g, a, u* and *ḥ*, present the *sphoṭa*, each individually. Bhartṛhari says that each letter here is the medium of manifestation of the unity, the whole *sphoṭa*. The problem of repetitiveness or redundancy is

avoided by postulating a difference or a distinct property (*viśeṣa*) each time in the resulting awareness or comprehension. The first letter (or the first sound-unit) shows the whole, but very indistinctly. It becomes gradually clearer and progressively better understood through successive stages until the last unit is uttered. Although the earlier units disappear when the last unit is reached, the memory-impressions left behind by those earlier units are in the hearer and each time there is qualitative difference in the memory-impression (*saṃskāra*). The *sphoṭa* itself does not admit of any qualitative or quantitative difference, addition or subtraction, but the *impression* or image of it may be imperfect and different, due to the imperfect nature of the human intellect. Our memory-impression may be dim or partial, clear or unclear, on various occasions but the object, *sphoṭa*, will always shine in its undimmed glory.

It may be further argued that Bhartṛhari's explanation of the comprehension of *sphoṭa* is unsatisfactory. For certainly the letters or sounds, *g*, *a*, *u* and *ḥ*, reveal themselves only individually. That is, we perceive each unit as it is produced, through our sense of hearing. If the *sphoṭa* '*gauḥ*' is also perceived when we perceive *g* or *a*, it must be perceived as *g* or *a*. But *gauḥ* is not *g* or *a*. The *sphoṭa* is not identical with any of the individual sound-units. To perceive something *x* as what it is not, is to misperceive *x*. We call it error. It is somewhat unparsimonious to first postulate an entity like the *sphoṭa* of *gauḥ* and then claim that it is only misperceived in the first, second or third letter, *g, a, u*. Besides, each misperception is based upon recognition of some similarity between the object present and the object superimposed. In the present case, it is difficult to obtain any satisfactory account of such a series of misperceptions. Bhartṛhari gives a bold reply to this criticism which also has the metaphysical underpinnings of his *sphoṭa* doctrine. He says that just as the cognition of the lower numbers, 'one' and 'two', is the means for understanding a higher number, say, 'three', although they are each distinct and different, similarly, comprehension of the *sphoṭa*, either a *pada-sphoṭa* or a *vākya-sphoṭa*, is invariably conditioned by the cognition of the so-called constituents, either the sounds, *g*, *a*, *u*, *ḥ*, or the word-elements 'Devadatta' and 'goes' (in the *sphoṭa* as a sentence 'Devadatta goes'). This presupposes an understanding of the Vaiśeṣika theory of numbers. According to this theory, numbers are distinct from one another and they constitute separate entities, and all numbers higher than one are produced by a sort of 'connective-comparative' cognition called

apekṣābuddhi. This is the notion that brings many unities under one number or another. When two things are present, one cognizes both as 'this is one and that is one'. This is the 'connective-comparative' cognition that gives rise to the awareness of 'two' or duality, and similarly with each succeeding number. In this theory understanding of the previous number is the conditioning factor for the awareness of the higher number. Similarly understanding of the distinct sounds or distinct word-elements is the means for the awareness of the combined unity, the *sphoṭa*. Besides, Bhartṛhari claims that for the *sphoṭa*, or what he would call the *real* language, to convey some meaning to the hearer, it is an essential and unavoidable condition that it be made explicit through the sequential and transitory *nāda* elements. Just as an episode of knowledge cannot be known or talked about without any reference to what it represents or what is known by it, similarly the *sphoṭa* cannot communicate or convey any meaning (or be known) without its being manifested through the sequential *nāda* or speech. To have a clear perception of a tree, for example, we must proceed from a distance step by step when the vague and indistinct blur gradually gives way to a distinct shape and identity. Similarly the *sphoṭa*, through steps or sequences, is distinctly understood and identified. Bhartṛhari claims that a man who has mastered the *śabdayoga* or obtained the light of the Eternal Verbum (some sages have apparently succeeded in this) can perceive or understand the *sphoṭa* clearly when the first sound is heard, just as a man with a perfect vision or unlimited power of sight (if such a man exists) can see the tree distinctly even from a distance. Comprehension of the *sphoṭa* is equivalent to such a distinct vision of reality.

V

Bhartṛhari has noted also that there is no unanimity among his predecessors regarding the real nature of the *sphoṭa*. He refers to several earlier views. According to one, the *sphoṭa* is the *universal* manifested by the individuals which are *nāda* elements or sounds. The *sphoṭa* is thus the class, of which sounds would be members. The commentary quotes a line from the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, where the word *sphoṭa* is used in the sense of the universal. It is the universal of the word *gauḥ*, not the universal called *word-ness*. We may call it the word-form, realized through the sequential utterance of the sounds. Some later commentators (cf. Bhaṭṭojī) apparently have taken the class-*sphoṭa*

theory as Bhartṛhari's own. But this is a mistake, and the claim of some modern scholars to the effect that *sphoṭa* is nothing but a postulation of a unitary word-universal, should be rejected. Another view mentioned by Bhartṛhari regards *sphoṭa* as an impermanent entity, produced by the initial sounds resulting from the contacts and separations of the vocal organs. The initial sounds themselves constitute the *sphoṭa*, they do not manifest it. But these sounds, despite being momentary, produce further sounds which thus spread in all directions, gradually decreasing in intensity, and reach the hearer's organ as *nāda*. The sound produced initially is the *sphoṭa*, other sounds produced in reverberation, are 'sound-produced' sounds (*dhvani* or *nāda*). Another view modifies this position, in that it understands both *sphoṭa* and *nāda* to be produced simultaneously through contacts and disconnection of vocal organs. They are like the flame and the light of a lamp. We produce both the flame and the light at the same time. The light 'travels', so does the reverberation. The flame is fixed in one place, and so is the *sphoṭa*, according to this view. None of these views would be acceptable to Bhartṛhari. His idea of *sphoṭa* is different, as already described.

Bhartṛhari draws another interesting distinction between two types of sounds in this connection. They are called the 'primary' sounds (*prākṛta*) and the 'derived' or 'transformed' sounds (*vaikṛta*). The usual way to take the 'primary' sounds is to refer to the linguistically relevant sound-sequences which the speaker intends to produce and the hearer expects to hear. It is the shared 'speech' which manifests *sphoṭa* (where the *sphoṭa* can be called *prakṛti*, the 'original', and hence the *prākṛta* is the manifestor of the 'original'). These primary sounds are not abstractions, but *ideal* particulars which have sequences, duration and other qualities—all specified by the particular language system. The long sounds should be long, of required length, the short vowels should be short and so on. But this must be conceived as divested of all personal idiosyncracies or 'mannerisms' of the speaker who utters them. It is the norm. The non-linguistic concomitants of any utterance are to be separated from this notion of 'primary' sound. This type of sound is also said to be identified with the *sphoṭa*, though of course wrongly, for the *sphoṭa* is conceived as a sequenceless, durationless and partless whole. In other words, one (wrongly) cognizes the *sphoṭa* as united with this 'primary' sound-series. (See also ch. 7, section III.)

The 'secondary' or 'transformed' sounds may therefore be taken

to be the individual instances of utterance that either reverberate or continue to show the individual peculiarities of the speakers, various differences in intonation, tempo, pitch, etc. The description here is a bit obscure, for it is also said that the manifestation of the *sphoṭa* still continues to happen or take place (after the first manifestation by the 'primary' sounds) with the help of the 'transformed' or 'secondary' sounds. 'Difference in the speed of utterance' (*vṛttibheda*) is also a factor in the 'transformed' sounds. They continue to manifest the *sphoṭa* again and again uninterruptedly for a longer period. They are said to resemble the light of a lamp which travels and continues to reveal the object as long as the lamp is lit. If this analogy is not very helpful, we may try another characterization. It is said that the slow utterance of a short *a* sound does not turn it into a long *ā* sound, nor does speedy utterance of the latter turn it into the former. The primary sounds *a* or *ā* are unchanged although the speed becomes a factor in the 'transformed' sound. In his commentary on the *Mahābhāṣya*, Bhartṛhari again refers to this distinction, but the matter there is further complicated by a reference to the two kinds of primary sounds (Iyer, 1969, 171). Kunjunni Raja's description of the 'primary' sounds as the acoustic image or the abstract sound pattern is much too influenced by a knowledge of modern linguistics (Kunjunni Raja, 1969, 120). That the 'transformed' sounds may be just 'reverberations' after the utterance (of the primary sounds) which reveal the *sphoṭa* is a possible interpretation which receives support from Helārāja in his commentary on the third *kāṇḍa* of the *Vākyapadīya*. But by 'reverberation' we need not think of the echo or returning sound but extend its sense to include the continuous producing of the sound-series after the initial sound is produced by the impact of the vocal organs. This may presuppose the Vaiśeṣika theory of sound, according to which the first sound is produced by impact, etc., and is believed to be a momentary entity, which dies at the next instant but nevertheless generates another *similar* sound-individual, which in its turn generates another before being destroyed in the next moment, and so on. This process continues for a while and then stops (on reaching the hearer's organ). How long the process will continue and how far it will 'travel', will depend upon the intensity of the originally produced sound. Bhartṛhari does not contribute to the Vaiśeṣika theory of sound-production, but it seems that he would accept this process of sound-travel with one crucial change made in the theory—instead of talking about production of a new sound at every moment, we should talk about the new manifestation of the same sound at every moment during its persistence.

VI

Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language is ultimately grounded in a monistic and idealistic metaphysical theory. He speaks of a transcendental word-essence (*śabdatattva*) as the first principle of the universe. His *sphoṭa* doctrine is finally aligned with the ultimate reality called *śabda-brahman*. A self-realized person attains unity with the word-principle—a man of perfect knowledge. There is no thought without language, no knowledge without word in it. Consciousness vibrates through words, and such vibrating consciousness or a particular cognitive mode motivates us to act and obtain results. Hence language offers the substratum upon which human activity is based. Language and meaning are not two separate realities such that one *conveys* the other. They are in essence the two sides of the same coin. The *sphoṭa* is this unitary principle where the symbol and what is signified are one. To understand each other's speech and to communicate, we do separate the inseparable, the sound and its sense. This is only instrumental to our mutual understanding. At the ultimate level, they are one. Bhartṛhari talks about three kinds of *sphoṭa*: letter- or sound-*sphoṭa*, word-*sphoṭa* and sentence-*sphoṭa*, but his primary interest lies with the sentence-*sphoṭa*. He underlines the importance and primacy of the sentence in language analysis in the second *kāṇḍa* of *Vākyapadīya*.

The sentence is the unit of communication. According to Bhartṛhari it is a unity, a whole, and not the result of joining together smaller units called words. The sentence-meaning is likewise a whole, not constituted by word-meanings put together. The Mīmāṃsakas apparently believed that the sentence and the sentence-meaning are produced by joining the smaller units, words and word-meanings together. Bhartṛhari examines five different definitions of the sentence put forward by the Mīmāṃsakas.

1. The sentence is a 'collection' (*saṃghāta*) of words, and each word has a certain meaning of its own. When it is used in a sentence, it conveys the same meaning. But when the words are linked in a sentence, then, through mutual linkage, an additional meaning is given to the whole unit. Thus the sentence-meaning is the 'mutual linkage' (*saṃsarga*).

2. The sentence is the 'sequence' (*krama*) of words, and the sentence-meaning belongs to this sequence. But since sequence is a property of time, one has to superimpose it upon the linguistic units called words.

Both views uphold an extreme form of atomism and are ascribed,

later on in history, to the Bhāṭṭa school of Mīmāṃsakas. This Bhāṭṭa theory has been nicknamed *abhihitānvaya*, 'designation followed by (syntactic) connection', theory. In simple language, it means: words designate their meanings and then the meanings are brought together to give the sentence-meanings.

3. A sentence must have a finite verb, and we may even say that the finite verb is the sentence, for all the other words would be required in any case to be connected with the verb. Hence if we understand the verb, we understand the sentence, all the other *kāraka*-words being understood. The sentence-meaning, on this view, is of the nature of an action or process. It is the dependence of the meanings of other words on that of the verb that makes the sentence-meaning possible.

4. Even the very first word can be called the sentence, for the meaning of the sentence is already contained in, though only vaguely or partially expressed by, the first word.

5. A further modification of the above view is that each word in the sentence contains the whole sentence-meaning, though it is only partly revealed by it.

These last three views are supportive of a sort of contextualism. Words may have isolated meanings, but when they are in isolation they cannot express such separate or isolated meanings or meaning-atoms. Each word in connection with another word has a designation (meaning), which we should call 'connected designation'; it designates a connected entity. This is ascribed later on to the Prābhākara school of Mīmāṃsakas, and nicknamed *anvitābhidhāna*, 'connected designation'. The idea is that since, in order to talk about a word, we talk about a word used in some sentence or other, its meaning cannot be known in isolation. We must necessarily talk about the word's contextual meaning or rather its meaning in connection with the meanings of other words in the sentence.

Bhartṛhari refutes all these five notions of the sentence, and rejects both atomism and the sort of contextualism that has been defended by the second group of Mīmāṃsakas. He puts forward instead a holistic framework and argues that a sentence might be understood as an indivisible *sphoṭa*. The sentences as well as their meanings are indivisible units. It is for the sake of convenience as well as for facilitating our learning and understanding of a language, that we break the wholes into parts and smaller units and correlate words

and word-meanings. The indivisible sentence is either internal to the language-user (any member of the speech-community) or external to him. It is externalized through its manifestation in speech or *nāda*. And through such manifestation it *appears* to have divisions (and this is true of both the sound-aspect and the meaning-aspect), although essentially it remains indivisible. In other words, appearance of divisibility of sentences and sentence-meanings is deceptive. It is like the 'cognition of multiplicity' (*citra-jñāna*). Although the cognition in such cases is one and indivisible, one sees plurality in it. A drink from the punch-bowl will have a plurality of flavours and tastes, but it is one and a unique drink—a whole.

Bhartṛhari underlines this indivisibility aspect by offering three more definitions of the notion of the sentence in addition to the five already mentioned.

6. The sentence is the class of the sequences of words, or the universal resident in the sequence of words. Or,

7. It is the whole string of words without any divisible part.

Both these definitions refer to what has been called the 'external' *sphoṭa* above. The former regards the sentence as a universal while the latter regards it as a particular whole. Technically the later grammarians called them the *jāti-sphoṭa* and the *vyakti-sphoṭa*, respectively.

8. The last definition refers to what has been called 'internal' *sphoṭa*. The sentence is a whole piece of cognitive awareness.

These three so-called definitions may be just recognition of the three different levels of the realization of the same *sphoṭa* or three different ways of capturing the same reality, *sphoṭa*, the sentence. The sentence-meaning in all these cases is declared to be given by *pratibhā*, i.e. by a 'flash of understanding' of what is being communicated. This flash of understanding is also declared to be holistic. We do not obtain it bit by bit. That is why some people are said to understand the meaning of the sentence even before the utterance of the whole sentence (see also ch. 10).

Several points are not made clear here. The correlation between the 'external' and the 'internal' *sphoṭa* must be a crucial factor here. For, an ordinary sentence with indexicals, be it in the form of a universal of the sound-sequence or a concrete and particular sound stretch, will have to have a different *sphoṭa* as the speaker, time and place change. This distinction can be maintained by associating the external sound-pattern with the 'internal' *sphoṭa* of the speaker, which reveals

itself to him at a particular time and place. This question has not been raised in this way and therefore the answer has not been given or discussed. Besides, if the *sphoṭa* is the *real* language or a particular language system, as Bhartṛhari seems to imply, we must apply the word 'language' in an extended sense, not to a system or string of sound-units having sense, but to what is only made explicit in a system-of-sound-units, not, that is, to the *nāda* exclusively, but to what is 'manifested' by *nāda*, the *sphoṭa*.

9

CRITICS OF THE *SPHOṬA* THEORY AND VIEWS OF LATER GRAMMARIANS

I. CRITICS OF THE *SPHOṬA* THEORY

The *sphoṭa* doctrine of the grammarians was rejected by most other philosophical schools. I shall develop a critique of the notion of *sphoṭa* as found in the writings of the Mīmāṃsakas and Naiyāyikas. In the second section of this chapter, the views of the later grammarians will be summarized. For the Mīmāṃsakas, there is no separate entity called *sphoṭa* apart from the externally existent (but only contingently manifested) sound-units or 'phonemes'. Śabara while commenting upon *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* I/1.1.5 cites the view of Upavarṣa (an ancient Mīmāṃsaka), who says that the sound-units or the letters alone constitute the word. The sound-units, in the Mīmāṃsā theory, are substantial entities—not properties of other substances. This means that at any given time an aggregation of these permanently present entities would be possible, and this aggregate would constitute a word to convey a meaning. There are obvious difficulties in this view. For one thing, since all sound-units of individual letters are always present, it would be rather impossible to decide which of them would form an aggregate to convey a meaning. Besides, if the two aggregates consisting of the same units or letters are supposed to convey the same idea, both *nadī* and *dīna* (the former means a 'river' while the latter means 'poor') would have the same import. Hence we have to introduce the notion of sequence or order or arrangement to underline the distinction in word-formations. But if the sound-units are eternal and omnipresent as the Mīmāṃsakas claim, how can we attribute either temporal or spatial sequence to their occurrences? To avoid difficulty, therefore, one has to postulate that such spatio-temporal sequence belongs to the manifestations or articulations of the sound-

units. It seems that Bhartṛhari in his first two definitions of the notion of the sentence took notice of this Mīmāṃsā view (see ch. 8, section VI): (1) aggregate or collection, and (2) sequence.

One may point out at this stage that the original dialectical question, in answer to which the *sphoṭa* was posited, may arise again, for the manifestations of sound-units are momentary and non-simultaneous. It thus becomes pertinent to ask whether the manifested sound-units convey the meaning conjointly or severally. If the first, the subsequent manifestation of sounds would be redundant, but it cannot be the second, either, for then the conjoined presence of the manifested sounds would be impossible. The Mīmāṃsakas, however, argue that although the manifestations are momentary, each of them leaves behind an impression (*saṃskāra*), and the last sound-unit, when it is manifested, will be conjoined with the aroused memory of the previous ones and then convey the meaning. If we raise the question about how and why there will be a regular and simultaneous but synthetic recollection of all the previous sounds together in exactly the same order (for memory-recollection cannot be regularized in this way), the Mīmāṃsakas' answer is that such contingencies do arise. The grammarians might say with some justice that this is a tortuous supposition and may not be preferable to the postulation of the additional entity called *sphoṭa*. Śabara has summed up his position against the *sphoṭa* as follows. The grammarians in order to uphold the *sphoṭa* doctrine make at least two unwarranted assumptions. First, they have to posit *sphoṭa* as a separate entity. Besides, they must admit along with those who do not admit *sphoṭa* that the 'relevant' memory impressions born out of direct hearing of letters or sounds have to have the power to manifest this *sphoṭa*. The Mīmāṃsakas can only admit that the memory-impressions of the hearing of letters do have the required power to express the relevant sense.

Kumārila the Mīmāṃsaka and Jayanta the Naiyāyika were perhaps the two most formidable critics of the *sphoṭa* theory. It is refreshing to see that Maṇḍana Miśra, who was supposed to be a disciple of Kumārila, wrote his *Sphoṭasiddhi* to refute the counter-arguments of Kumārila found in the *Sphoṭavāda* section of his *Ślokavārttika*, and to establish the *sphoṭa* theory. An analysis of these arguments is to be found in Sastri (1959, 103–32).

Kumārila says, among other things, that the word 'cow' is taken by the *sphoṭa* theorists to be a simple, unitary entity (the *sphoṭa*), but indeed the word (or the sentence) is a composite fact having different

letters (and words) as its components. The word (or the so-called *sphoṭa*) cannot be different from the constituent letters. If it were different, it would be felt or perceived to be a distinct entity without any reference to the letters as its constituents. But what everybody perceives and universally feels is nothing but the group of letters; nobody perceives anything else that is distinct from these letters. The only difference is that when we hear an utterance each cognition grasps a single letter or sound-unit, and the final cognition may take note of all of them together. But this cannot justify the assumption that the so-called word (or the sentence) is a *sphoṭa*, that is, something numerically and qualitatively different from the group of letters. No cognition of the word is possible without, and independently of, the cognition of letters. This only shows that the word (or the sentence) is a multiple or composite entity, not a simple unity. It is only our cognition of this composite entity which is a single act. The cognitive act is one, but its content is not so. That is, what we grasp by such a single cognitive act may have many components. Hence we may talk about an illusion or misperception here from a different point of view. The unity of the word-*sphoṭa* or sentence-*sphoṭa* is only an appearance, a mere appearance. The multiple entity *appears* to be a unity (a case of cognizing something as what it is not—a case of misperception), and the singularity of the cognition itself is responsible for the illusion of unity of the content. What is grasped as a word (or a sentence) is felt to be a unity, or an indivisible entity because we have finally one indivisible cognitive episode to apprehend it. Hence it is a case of *transference* of a characteristic of the cognition to its content, i.e. what is cognized.

This is a very ingenious argument. The composite entity (word or sentence) appears as one and indivisible just as a rope appears as a snake. The advocates of the *sphoṭa* theory tried to talk about another kind of misperception or illusion (already discussed) where the *sphoṭa* (the whole) appears as a letter or a group of letters or sound-units. We perceive the letters, which is a misperception according to the *sphoṭa* theorists, for we perceive the real word, the *sphoṭa*, the unity, appearing as letters or a group of letters (a composite entity). Kumārila turns the tables against the *sphoṭa* theorists by claiming that the final cognition of the unity (or the *feeling* of unity which may characterize our final perception of the word) is actually an illusion—a misperception of the composite entity consisting of letters appearing as a unity, as an impartite whole. Maṇḍana Miśra in reply has said that it

is a drawback of our finite intelligence that we cannot grasp the indivisible word (or the sentence) apart from and independently of the letters or sound-units. This however cannot annul the intuition of the unity. The fact that the apprehension of multiplicity is invariably concomitant with the apprehension of unity, and that unity in such cases is never apprehended in isolation, does not prove that the unity is an illusion. For, philosophers such as Kumārila and other realists do not deny the reality (non-illusoriness) of such entities as the cow-universal (or the whole), although a cow-universal is always apprehended along with individual cows and never in isolation. Lest we misunderstand it, the point of the argument is not that the *sphoṭa* is actually to be accepted as a universal, but that it is to be accepted as a separate entity, apart from the plurality of letters, just as a cow-universal is admitted as separate from the individual cows or even a pot as a 'whole' is accepted by Nyāya as an entity separate from the combination of its parts (pot-halves). We have already noted above that the *sphoṭa* may be admitted as a 'universal' or *jāti-sphoṭa*, or a *vyakti-sphoṭa* or 'particularistic' *sphoṭa* or even an 'internal' *sphoṭa* grasped by one piece of cognitive awareness.

The Mīmāṃsakas admit each letter or sound-unit as eternal and each word as only a sequence of such letters, and each sentence similarly as a further sequence. Now, the sequence cannot belong naturally to the eternal letters but has to be created by the effort of sentient beings. Such efforts are volitional and hence the sequences resulting from them are also non-eternal. This would, however, go against the usual Mīmāṃsaka claim that even the words and the sentences are eternal and only manifested by the contacts of the different parts of the vocal organ. Kumārila points out that the sequence cannot be an essential qualifier of the letters, and hence 'the sequence of letters' has to be interpreted as a group of letters 'superficially indicated' by a particular sequence. To use the Indian logical terminology, the sequence is not the *viśeṣaṇa* but an *upalakṣaṇa*. The sequence created by the human agency is only a 'pointer' to the word, it is not a part of it, for the word is uncreated. Therefore, Kumārila asserts, the sequence which is non-eternal is not a *property* of the word (*padadharma*), and hence the word does not become impermanent thereby.

Naiyāyikas, e.g. Jayanta, followed Kumārila in their critique of the *sphoṭa* doctrine. Vātsyāyana has said while commenting upon *Nyāyasūtra* 3.2.62 that a word is determined by a *pratisandhāna* 'connective-recollective cognition' of different *heard* letters (sound-units),

but these letters or sound-units are only momentary realities. Jayanta clearly states that a word is only a cluster of letters and a sentence is only a cluster of words. The Mīmāṃsakas regard the letter *g*, for example, as one eternal entity although it may be pronounced by many speakers loudly or mildly, strongly or weakly. But the Naiyāyikas believe that each utterance of *g* by different speakers creates a distinct entity. Our recognition of all '*g*'s as the same *g* is due to the sound-universal *g* (*g*-hood), or due to similarity between one utterance and another. The Naiyāyikas take the Mīmāṃsakas to task by pointing out that if the letter *g* is eternal and one and the difference in each of its utterances is due to difference of manifestation, then it comes very close to the letter-*sphoṭa* which the Mīmāṃsakas are out to reject. The Naiyāyikas, however, accept the solution of Kumārila regarding the concurrence of different letters: memory-impressions left behind by different utterances of former letters can concur with the direct perception of the last letter whence the meaning of the word would be revealed. Or, even a connective-recollective cognition of all letters together in a sequence may generate the word-meaning.

II. LATER GRAMMARIANS: CLASSIFICATION OF *SPHOṬA*

The later grammarians have argued that those who think that a word is constituted by letters only, would have to admit that each letter must have some significatory power for otherwise their combination (the word) cannot be significant. But there is some absurdity in the conception that each letter, *g* for example, has some significatory power. The *sphoṭa* is posited to avoid this absurdity. For otherwise the same letter *g* occurring in a thousand words would have to have a thousand implicit meanings. Even the advocates of the *Yoga* system of Patañjali lend support to this view of the grammarians, as it was clearly stated in the *Vyāsa-bhāṣya* of *Yoga-sūtra* 3.17. (This agreement, however, does not throw any further light upon the question of identity of two Patañjalis—one the grammarian and author of the *Mahābhāṣya* and the other the author of the *Yoga-sūtras*.) Another simple argument is used in defence of the *sphoṭa* doctrine. This is based upon the ambiguity of the word *śabda* in Sanskrit. People say, 'we understand the meaning from the *śabda*'. Here it is argued that since the word *śabda* is singular, it cannot stand for the plurality of sound-units (or letters). For otherwise people would say 'we understand the meaning from the *śabda-s* or the group of sound-units'.

This linguistic intuition supports the unity of the word or of the sentence. It is the *sphoṭa* that contributes this unity to the cluster of sound-units. Hence people unconsciously talk about the *sphoṭa* when they use '*śabda*'. The reply of the Mīmāṃsakas and the Naiyāyikas would be obvious, and so we need not go into it here.

Many single treatises on *sphoṭa* have been written since Maṇḍana Miśra. We can mention Bharata Miśra, Śeṣakṛṣṇa, and Nāgeśa among the authors of such treatises. Nāgeśa (18th century AD), however, excelled the others because of his new style and erudition. In his *Sphoṭavāda* he begins by mentioning a classification of *sphoṭa* into eight different types: (1) letter, (2) word, (3) sentence, (4) indivisible word, (5) indivisible sentence, (6) letter-universal, (7) word-universal and (8) sentence-universal. He defines *sphoṭa* etymologically as 'that from which the meaning bursts forth'—the meaning-bearer. The commentator, Kṛṣṇamācārya, explains that since the *sphoṭa* is taken here in such a general sense, the above classification includes the views of even the rival philosophers. Nāgeśa, however, describes the classification as the *Vaiyākaraṇa-siddhānta*, 'tenets of the grammarians'. He explains that the *sphoṭa* as the 'meaning-bearer' (*vācaka*) can be applied to the letters, the words and the sentence. The Mīmāṃsakas regard the letters in cluster as expressive of meaning, while the grammarians refute this view. But even according to the latter, certain letters, e.g. *l* (the verbal affixes expressive of tenses and moods), are meaning-bearers. Similarly, *sphoṭa* (2) and (3) assign significatory power to words and sentences. *Sphoṭas* (1) to (3) are described as 'divisible' *sphoṭas*. The grammarians, however, prefer the 'indivisible' *sphoṭas*, (4) and (5), indivisible word-*sphoṭa* and indivisible sentence-*sphoṭa*. But the two can be understood as 'particularistic' or non-universals, i.e. *vyakti-sphoṭa*. Hence the other three, 6–8, are mentioned: the universals of letters as *sphoṭa*, the universals of words as *sphoṭa* and the universals of sentences as *sphoṭa*. Of all these eight, Nāgeśa clearly shows his preference for the indivisible sentence-*sphoṭa* in his *Laghumañjuṣā*. It is not clear whether he means the 'non-universal indivisible sentence' or the 'universal indivisible sentence'. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa made it clear in his *Sphoṭanirṇaya*: The preferred alternative for the grammarians is the 'universal indivisible sentence'. Nāgeśa thought that in this way Bhartṛhari's view would be vindicated.

Our account would be incomplete if we did not refer to the dominant metaphysical aspect of the *sphoṭa* doctrine. The *sphoṭa* is

ultimately said to be one in every sentient being. It is the linguistic capability of man, which is essentially intertwined with Consciousness. In fact, language is the 'vibration' of consciousness and it is argued that the ultimate speech-principle and the ultimate principle of consciousness are indistinguishable. The ultimate Reality for Bhartṛhari is the Absolute Consciousness which is identical with *Śabda-Brahman*, the Eternal Verbum. It is only in this sense that Bhartṛhari asserted in unmistakable language that the whole world, with all its variety and diversity, emanated from this one supreme principle—the word, ŚABDA. Later grammarians were engaged in the well known dispute of Indian philosophical cosmology: whether the world evolving out of the Absolute is a real transformation (*pariṇāma*) which would accord a reality to all diversities, or whether the diversity is a 'mere appearance' (an apparent transformation) of the Absolute. Many modern scholars have disputed the issue between *pariṇāma*, 'real transformation', and *vivarta*, 'mere appearance', as applicable to the metaphysical aspect of the *sphoṭa* doctrine. Bhartṛhari notes in the very first verse of his *Vākyapadīya* that the indestructible essence of ŚABDA is without beginning or end; from this emanates all worldly activities—a process which is revealed in the form of manifested objects.

The transition of the eternal *sphoṭa* to the form of spoken or audible words and sentences at the lowest level is described as occurring in four stages (Bhartṛhari talked about three stages, see ch. 8). They are technically called *parā*, the 'Ultimate', *paśyantī*, the undifferentiated stage, *madhyamā*, the 'intermediate' stage, and *vaikharī*, the 'spoken' stage. This is how the later grammarians view the matter. The language (*śabda*) at the *parā* stage is identified with the Ultimate Brahman. Those who used this concept of *sphoṭa* in Tantra correlated this stage with the *kuṇḍalinī* or *mulādhāra cakra*. It is also called *nāda* here (not to be confused with *nāda* in the sense of audible sound). The *paśyantī* stage is also said to be the subtle *sphoṭa*. The 'intermediate' stage is described as the voice of Silence. The fourth stage is the External-*sphoṭa*, which is ordinarily called language by all concerned. It is rather intriguing to see how the metaphysical aspect of the doctrine of *sphoṭa*, first enunciated by the grammarians, was elevated to the altar of the 'worship of *nāda*', which brought together the grammarians, musicians, artists, poets, and mantra-practitioners under the common mystical umbrella of the NĀDA-SPHOṬA reality. But perhaps this is *sphoṭa* in a completely different sense.

10

WORDS vs. SENTENCES

1. DIVISIBILITY VS. INDIVISIBILITY OF SENTENCES

In this chapter we shall discuss the traditional controversy in India regarding the primary units of meaning, and the contextuality of meaning. In *Vākyapadīya*, ch. 2, Bhartṛhari (1965 edn.) notes that there are two principal philosophical theses regarding the notion of the sentence and sentence-meaning: one is called the 'indivisibility' thesis (*a-khaṇḍa-pakṣa*) and the other is the 'divisibility' thesis (*khaṇḍa-pakṣa*). The first thesis is what Bhartṛhari himself maintains while the second is held by his opponents, the Mīmāṃsakas. For our purpose we propose to call the first 'sentence-holism' and the second 'atomism'. There are two main questions: What is a sentence? and What constitutes the sentence-meaning? More specifically, how is a sentence constituted, and how is the meaning of a whole sentence cognized by the hearer after the utterance is made?

According to sentence-holism, sentences are wholes and they are the unanalysable units of meaningful discourse. Similarly, the meanings of sentences themselves are wholes. In fact they are also timeless, for destruction is usually believed to be dissolution into parts. We reach words as parts of the sentence, and word-meanings as parts of the sentence-meaning through 'analysis, synthesis and abstraction' (a method that is called *apoddhāra*). This method is only instrumental in facilitating our language-learning, a convenient way of making explicit our implicit linguistic competence. The words are no less abstractions than the letters are. The meaning of a word in isolation is an imaginary construct. In fact, words are as much devoid of meaning as the letters or some syllables in a word, like 'rat' in 'Socrates'. The meaning of a complete sentence is given to us as a whole block of reality. We chip this whole and correlate such abstracted (extracted) bits and pieces of meaning with words and particles which are also reached by such a process of breaking apart the whole sentence. On

this theory, a sentence cannot be a composite entity with words as constituent elements, and the meaning of a sentence likewise cannot be given by the allocation or computation of word-meanings individually considered. (This view is very similar to that of W. V. Quine, 1960.) The whole meaning expressed by a sentence can share a common structure and have common 'parts', but such parts would not be capable of existing in isolation from the rest. In this sense, they would be just our own 'abstractions'. A weaker implication may be that, in ontological terms, the wholes (whether sentences or other wholes) may have parts but such parts lose their significance (perhaps *ontic* significance) as soon as they lose their contextuality in the whole. (The opponent would have to say that there may be wholes which have parts but the latter will not lose any ontic significance if they lose contextuality or connection with the whole.) This holistic solution of Bhartṛhari was seriously challenged by the Mīmāṃsakas.

II. 'ISOLATED' VS. 'RELATED DESIGNATION' BY WORDS

Bhartṛhari's view has been discussed in chapter 8, so I shall now consider the so-called atomistic views of the two Mīmāṃsā subschools. Both atomistic views recognized that the sentence is a composite entity composed of elements which we call words, particles, etc. These elements are meaningful units of expression. The sentence-meaning must be connected with these units. The hearer grasps the meaning of a sentence or what is spoken, provided he has what we may call linguistic competence, i.e. knowledge of the meanings of words and particles as well as of how that particular language works. In this view, it will be unreasonable to take sentences as the smallest meaningful units, for sentences are virtually countless and we certainly cannot learn a language by learning these countless sentences and their meanings. It is only by learning a few (a finite number of) words and seeing how that language works that we gain the linguistic competence described above.

What has been stated above is a view commonly held by the two sub-schools of Mīmāṃsā, the Bhāṭṭa (Kumārila, *c.* AD 650, 1898 edn) and the Prābhākara (Prabhākara *c.* AD 670, 1932 edn). They both reject Bhartṛhari's view. But there was internal difference between these two sub-schools which led to great controversies for several centuries. This becomes clear as soon as we ask the following question: How does the competent hearer recognize sentence-meaning as a

whole from hearing, in bits and pieces, the constituent words in sequence? Does he first cognize or recognize the meaning of each constituent word and then join these bits and pieces of meaning together to cognize a connected whole—the sentence meaning? If our answer is yes, then we are talking from the Bhāṭṭa point of view. Designation by words first, then the designata are connected to form a unity (*abhihitānvaya*). Alternatively, the Prābhākara says that a person recognizes the meaning of the whole sentence by hearing simply the constituent words put together syntactically: 'connected designation (by any word)' (*anvitābhidhāna*).

In the first (Bhāṭṭa) view, the hearer recognizes the meaning of the whole sentence by figuring out first the meanings of individual words, whereas in the second (Prābhākara) view, he recognizes the meaning of the sentences *directly* from the words themselves, skipping the intermediate step of grasping singly the individual word-meanings. Phrased in this way the distinction may seem trivial, but it is not really so. A little reflection shows that according to the first view, meanings of words are assumed to be independent units, as *complete* objects. In recognizing the meaning of a sentence (i.e., interpreting a sentence made of several words), we as hearers must first obtain these self-subsistent building blocks (meanings) and then cement these blocks to obtain the connected meaning of the sentence. This implies that the distinction between word-meanings and sentence-meaning is one of building blocks and the building itself. Here we move close to the intuition which prompted the modern 'composition' principle.

The word 'directly', in the second view, i.e., that we recognize or obtain the sentence-meaning *directly* from the words themselves, means that there is no intervening event (such as that of our grasping the so-called word-meanings as building blocks) between our knowledge of the words (through our hearing) and our knowledge of the meaning of the sentences made of such words. This has the implication that the meanings of the words are not, in some sense, context-free, independent objects. Whatever a word designates, it is always related or connected (*anvita*) with the designation of other words in the sentence. Notice that this comes very close to saying that a word gains its proper meaning *only* in a context, i.e., in the context of a sentence. In fact, the second view expressly advocates that we know or learn the meaning of a word only by considering the sentential context in which it occurs. We must also note that the main point in the dispute is partly epistemological. The question is how do we

come to know, as we invariably do, the complete and connected meaning of the sentence simply on the basis of our knowledge of the constituent elements, the words?

III. THE TWO 'ATOMISTIC' VIEWS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Both sides in the dispute appeal to a general theory about language acquisition. We learn a language invariably by acquiring knowledge of word-meanings given in the context of sentences whose meanings are also known or given. A child learns his language in this way by observing the linguistic and other behaviour of the adults. The older adult (*uttamavṛddha*) gives some command to the younger adult (*madhyamavṛddha*) who acts to obey. 'Bring a horse'—a horse is brought. 'Bring a dog and tie the horse', and so it is done. That is how a child's acquisition of the meanings of individual words is explained. The Bhāṭṭa says here that there is thus the denotative power in the individual words, to give us isolated objects, actions, qualities and relations (as 'meanings'). Hence given any newly formed sentence we can derive its meaning following the 'expected' syntactic pattern (*ākāṃkṣā*) by computing and manipulating such individual meanings to construct a whole. But the Prābhākara disagrees. He says that since individual word-meanings are derived only in the context of some sentence or other and therefore from words already syntactically connected with other words, we learn such word-meanings along with their possible (semantic) connections with other word-meanings. The denotative power of a word gives us not simply the object, or action, or quality, or relation, but also each item's possible connection with other items. Thus, being presented with a sentence we do not waste time by first computing meanings from words and syntax and manipulating such meanings into a whole, but we straight away derive the connected meaning as a whole, objects with action, quality with the qualified and a relation with relata. One of the arguments usually given in support of the Bhāṭṭa view, is discussed below.

Sentences are innumerable, but the word-lexicon has a manageable size. The logic of parsimony demands that it is the word that should be endowed with the designative power (*śakti*), not the sentence. Consider the following four sentences: 'Bring (a) cow', 'Bring (a) horse', 'Tie (a) cow', 'Tie (a) horse'. The child's ability to learn the language is facilitated by learning the four *words* (Sanskrit does

not use articles) and their corresponding meanings (real elements of the world) as opposed to learning the four sentences and their corresponding meanings. Add a word 'black' to each of the four sentences and see that by learning five words we can interpret eight combinations. We can also better explain our ability to interpret new combinations which we have never heard before, such as new poetical compositions by a poet. Moreover, if there are several unfamiliar words in a sentence, we cannot cognize the sentential meaning. Using such and other arguments, the Bhāṭṭa repudiates Bhartṛhari's sentence-holism.

Against the Prābhākara, however, the Bhāṭṭa argues as follows. If isolated, atomic word-meanings are like the discrete points of distinct iron pins (*ayaḥśalākā*), how can they constitute a continuous line representing the unity of the sentential meaning? For obviously the separate elements, being independent of each other, cannot naturally *merge* into each other to form a continuous line. The Bhāṭṭa's answer is that it is done through *ākṣepa*, i.e., an extrapolative judgement (when word-meanings are individually cognized), or through a sort of suggestive inference (*arthāpatti*) on the part of the hearer.

What is meant by *ākṣepa* or *arthāpatti*? When what is presented seems incomplete to us we are forced to imagine some suitable additional (unrepresented) element for completion. This is called *ākṣepa*. By looking at a baby in a cradle one may imagine by *ākṣepa* that there is a mother nearby. *Arthāpatti* has a slightly different meaning. It is a proper inference from the given data. If I see that my desk is no longer in my room, I can easily infer that it has been removed (otherwise it would be impossible to explain such absence under the circumstances). It is argued that our knowledge of the missing connectors between two word-meanings is suggested by such 'extrapolation' or 'inference'. Each of the words gives some independent *object* as its *complete* meaning and then since they are in a sentence together (*āsatti*) along with syntactic expectancy (*ākāṃkṣā*) and semantic fitness (*yogyatā*) (see ch. 6), we infer these appropriate connections to obtain the connected meaning of the sentence. Notice that the Bhāṭṭa plays down the logical role of *ākāṃkṣā* or syntactic expectancy. Or, he might regard it as simply a psychological factor. The Naiyāyika, who is the third party with this atomistic framework, emphasizes, however, that the interconnection between word-meanings is derived from the 'syntax' i.e., from *ākāṃkṣā*, which is defined (non-psychologistically) as the interconnectedness, order, etc., of the elements of representation.

Here the basic issue seems to touch the well-entrenched dispute area where we sometimes talk about interdependence or one-way dependence between different elements or constituents (subject and predicate, proper name and general term, noun and verb) that seem to form a unity in a proposition. The Bhāṭṭa says that the designata of words are unrelated objects and hence to connect them we need a presumptive judgement (inspired by the psychological factor 'expectancy'). In the second (Prābhākara) view the word's *designative* power extends to a designatum *plus* possible linkages with others. The word means the *related* item. Here the same underplaying of the importance of syntax is noticeable. The unity of the sentential meaning is guaranteed here by the *semantic contribution* (an object plus possible relation) of the words themselves. There is no need for additional suggestive inference or extrapolative judgement to cognize this unity. The Bhāṭṭa argues in reply that by the Prābhākara theory we cannot explain satisfactorily our prompt understanding of the meaning of many new sentences which we have never heard during our days of language-learning. We may note that due to, perhaps, similar misgivings the 'composition' principle is thought to have some edge over the 'context' principle.

IV. SYNCATEGOREMATISM

It has been suggested that the Prābhākara theory of 'related designation' is an extreme form of syncategorematism (Staal, 1969). The question is: does the strong context principle—'words have meanings only in the context of a sentence'—necessarily entail syncategorematism? Usual examples of syncategorematic words are grammatical particles, adverbs, prepositions, etc.: 'sake' in 'for the sake of', to take a typical case. (For *strong* context principle, see Sen in Matilal and Sen.)

Using the older idea of a term, one can say that a syncategorematic word is one which cannot be used as a term independently but only in conjunction with other word or words. Quine extended the notion to include certain adjectives, 'little elephant', 'little butterfly', 'poor violinist', and 'true artist'. In these cases, the qualifying words may have some independent meanings, but they are largely irrelevant, and from the meaning of combined phrases, meanings of such words are not (easily) separable.

Recently Paul Gochet (1985) has argued that Quine (1960) on the whole prefers a syncategorematic treatment of predicates or general

terms. He also claims that even if we deny this generally, we have to admit that some (at least one) predicates must be syncategorematic (for example, such well-known predicates of logic as 'ϵ', 'is a member of', and '=', 'is identical with'). An extreme form of syncategorematism, it appears, would have to be a claim that all words are like this. On a milder interpretation, syncategorematism may be a vague way of underscoring the later Wittgensteinian claim that the meaning of a word is the *use* it has in language. Does the Prābhākara view come somewhat close to such a position? There is an obvious difficulty here. It is important to see the contrast. Wittgenstein's motivation was to move away from the idea that our talk of the meaning of the word is the talk of the object it stands for, or the entity with which it is somehow correlated. The Prābhākara's main concern was to account for how the constituent word-meanings, if they are given in isolated forms, could be *linked up*, or *hooked up*, with one another in order to form a unity. In fact, one way to describe the Prābhākara's view is to say that for him the semantic value of such words is 'an object with a hook (to pick out another object)' so that two or several of them in a sentence can naturally cling together to form a whole. Besides, if admission of syncategorematic words in language presupposes presence of *categorematic* words in combination with which they would form meaningful units, then this is not the view of the Prābhākara. For him, each word needs another to form a meaningful unit. In fact, this general point can be used as a criticism of the strong context principle (see Matilal and Sen, 1989), if it is construed wholly in the syncategorematic way. We must note that while both the Prābhākara view and at least some version of the context principle may tell us that the meaning of a word is the contribution it makes to the meaning of a sentence in which it occurs, the 'context' principle requires that *a word unconnected with other words cannot have a meaning* while the Prābhākara requires that *a word cannot have such a meaning as is unconnected with the meanings of other words.*

V. ARGUMENT FOR THE CONTEXT-SENSITIVITY OF MEANINGS

I shall now present the argument of the Prābhākara in defence of the theory. The Bhāṭṭa argues that the Prābhākara by making all word-meanings 'context-sensitive' faces a dilemma. Consider a two-word sentence: '*XY*' meaning a structured unit. If we ask what meaning is conveyed by '*X*' we have to answer that if it conveys any meaning at

all then it conveys the unitary meaning of '*XY*' itself. And the same is the case with '*Y*'. This is so because the Prābhākara has claimed that the meaning of the word of a sentence contains within itself, though implicitly, the whole sentence-meaning, i.e, the connected meaning. This seems to amount to sentence-holism, which the Prābhākara tries to avoid. But the Prābhākara maintains that sentences are made of parts which are words and if the meaning of one part contains the meaning of the whole, the other part becomes redundant. Hence the dilemma before the Prābhākara: either redundancy or sentence-holism.

The Prābhākara answers that the word 'cow' in the sentence 'Bring a cow' or 'The cow is white' designates a cow along with the idea of its linkage with all other possible objects, or a cow with all the possible qualities, modalities and actions, and the second element in the sentence is necessary *only* to help us determine which *particular* linkage, to the exclusion of all other possible linkages, is to be taken into account.

But this is not enough. For one thing, if by the utterance of the word 'cow' one becomes aware of the cow linked with all the possibilities (but no specific linkage is given), one is in effect aware of nothing specific at all. This is an incomplete, and hence a very vague, awareness of meaning. (For a thirsty person a salty ocean is no better than a dry, dreary desert. This analogy is from Jayanta. The vagueness of meaning, when all possible linkages are taken into account, is like the saltiness of the ocean water. Knowledge of the object with all possible linkages is equal to no knowledge at all!) A dilemma arises again: (a) If the second word is necessary, is it so by its mere presence? If so, we again embrace sentence-holism. (b) Is it necessary because it *contributes* its own meaning to the whole? If so, it resolves into the Bhāṭṭa view: words give their meanings first and then the sentential meaning is derived from them.

To escape the horns of this dilemma, the Prābhākara proceeds as follows: first he concedes that the expression 'a cow' means the object cow with infinite possibilities of linkage and the function of the other phrase 'bring' or 'is white' is to exclude other possibilites except the particularly intended one. The second phrase performs this function by its *mere presence*, not by contributing its own meaning. This is not sentence-holism. For holism demands that the combination as a whole has the *combined* (whole) *meaning*, and contributions of individual elements are not *recognized* at all, *save through an artificial analysis*. But the Prābhākara theory recognizes that the second element's contri-

bution lies only in excluding all other possible combinations save the one that is intended by the sentence.

Jayanta (*c.* AD 900, 1936 edn, 366–7) explains the point with the help of several analogies. Cooking is the result of many factors: burning wood, a pan holding water, etc. They all individually contribute to the combined effect, *cooking*, by performing their own functions which can be individually recognized. Similarly the unitary knowledge of the meaning of a sentence is the result of the interrelated but separately recognizable functions of its constituent words.

A wagon moves and each part of it is also moving. We can only *recognize* separately the mutually connected function of each part but all such parts jointly produce the motion of the wagon as a whole. The functions of such parts (or their motion) are not separable in reality. Similarly our knowledge of the meaning of a sentence is *produced* by the interrelated function of the constituent words. We can of course *recognize* the unconnected 'own' meaning of each constituent word, just as we can observe the individual functions of all parts of the moving wagon, which cause it to move. But such functions do not have separate existence outside the context. We may be reminded here of a comment by Dummett (1981): 'In the order of *recognition*, the sense of the word is primary.' But the point here straddles both epistemic and ontological concerns. Unconnected word-meanings can be recognized but it would be wrong to construe them as separate entities. Each of them can play a role only in combination with others. The Bhāṭṭa makes a mistake of construing them as separate reals and thus he identifies them with the (material and immaterial) objects such as a pot, blue colour and action.

More generally, combination of factors produces a combined effect and each factor in combination produces its own effect, which is discernible only in that combined effect. The designative power of a word becomes manifest only in combination with other words or only when it is placed in its *natural home*, a sentence (one-word sentences being allowed). A word may *remind* us of an isolated independent object, but to contribute to the sentence-meaning it must *mean* directly an object with a linkage. To put it bluntly, according to the view we are considering, a word does not *mean* an isolated object, although it may *remind* us of such an object through associative psychological connection, while what it *means* is what it contributes to the sentence-meaning, i.e., an object with linkage with others. In Jayanta's language (1936 edn, 366–7):

> A word does not *mean* a pure object. For we cannot find pure (isolated) words which are not functioning in combination with others. These words are not employed separately to give their 'own meaning' and then the meaning they have in combination with others. They are always used to give their meaning in combination with others. But when they are used in this way it is not that we cannot *recognize* their *own* function (or *own* meaning). Therefore, the sentence cannot be a partless whole (nor can its meaning be so, either), for the individual functions of the parts are present and also recognized.

Thus, the Prābhākara believes that perils of holism can be avoided and the drift towards extreme atomism can be stopped. It is intriguing to note the use of the expression '*own* meaning' here. It seems that the Prābhākara is *not* opposed to our talk of the 'own' meaning of the word as long as we take it to be the object (or action, or quality or relation) that we are reminded of, whenever we hear the word. It comes to us through associative psychological conditioning.

VI. EPISTEMOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The context principle may be taken to be a very general thesis about meaning, and as a general thesis it would oppose what has been called *epistemological atomism* (Dummett, 1981). This is the view that at least some objects are 'given' to us in sense perception or intuition—and hence our knowledge is in the first instance knowledge of isolated objects (and their properties). This view would then construct the meaning (sense or reference) of complex expressions (sentences, etc.) in terms of those sense-perceptible *givens* or the isolated objects. In *Der Gedanke*, Frege seems to have rejected this view impressionistically. Perception of objects, he said, involved grasping of thoughts. It is not to be confused with pure sensory reaction. Knowing is always *knowing that*. The context principle, viewed as a general thesis of meaning, would also oppose atomism. This reference to Frege undoubtedly offers some insight into our discussion of the Prābhākara theory which opposes a similar sort of epistemological atomism of the Bhāṭṭa school. (For Frege's context principle see Dummett, 1981).

Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (1898 edn) cited the case of a perceptual judgement constructed out of the bits and pieces of the sense-given. We can take this to be another version of epistemological atomism, which is then extended to the philosophy of language to explain our knowledge of

the connected meaning of sentences. Here is the example. Seeing a white flash moving swiftly and hearing the noise of hoofs and neighing, one judges perceptually 'a white horse runs'. Here the bits of the sense-given are white flash, hoof-noise and neighing, but a judgement that connects these bits into a whole is reached through the operation of the mind. Similarly there is the operation of the mind which connects the bits and pieces of isolated meanings, to obtain the connected sentential meaning.

The Bhāṭṭa's point seems to be this. The bits and pieces of the objective world, i.e., the isolated objects themselves, possess the capacity (power) in themselves to stimulate the observer enough first to grasp the isolated objects and then to formulate a judgement that connects them. There are presumably three constituent items in the resulting judgement. They are separable as: (1) the white flash presented visually, (2) the notion of horsehood presented by the instant inference from the sound of neighing, and (3) the notion of running presented by the inference from the noise of hoofs striking against the ground. These three are presented in three different ways (through three different avenues of knowledge, *pramāṇas*) and hence presumably they are grasped as unconnected bits of objects. Having been grasped, they can by themselves evoke a judgement which unites them. This shows that a judgemental knowledge is possible simply on the basis of the presentation of the isolated object-atoms themselves. Similarly, let each word in the sentence present the individual unconnected meaning (objects, properties, actions, etc.). When such isolated meanings are grasped, there will automatically arise the judgement of the connected sentential meaning.

Prabhākara (1932 edn) disagrees. The example, he says, is wrongly construed. There is no doubt that the three bits of object are separately presented in the given example, their sources being different in each case. But a connected judgement automatically arises in the person, as soon as he can locate all these three bits into one spatial location or in one particular substance, the horse. Śālikanātha (*c.* AD 850, 1961 edn), following Prabhākara, argues that if the person is simply unaware or uncertain of the connectedness of the three bits, he would have three disconnected awarenesses: 'There is a horse there, something is white, and somebody is running'. But from the bits and pieces of the *given*, the required judgement 'A white horse is running' arises, since he can recognize both neighing and the action of running as belonging to the (same) substratum as the white flash. Or, if he is

*un*aware of the lack of connection of these objects he would have the required judgement. The judgement may finally be based upon knowledge of connected facts, or even lack of knowledge of the *dis*-connection of isolated bits. In the case of a sentence, the words themselves as constituents provide, by way of presenting their *meanings*, such connected facts, but since such connected facts and the sentential meaning are not different from each other, we know the sentential meaning directly from the knowledge of the words and need not go through the collection of (word-) meaning-atoms.

Śālikanātha (1961 edn) was concerned with the epistemological question: How do we as hearers know the sentence-meaning with our usual linguistic competence (*vyutpatti*)? But it is by no means clear whether an ontology of connected facts is conceded here by the Prābhākara. Perhaps not. What is asserted is rather that word-meanings properly understood are connected facts, not isolated, unconnected bits of objects. For otherwise it would be impossible to derive knowledge of the connected sentential meaning from unconnected bits. To imagine any additional device, as the Bhāṭṭa does, for providing the required connection between isolated objects, would be going against the principle of parsimony.

The Prābhākara points out that the Bhāṭṭa may be violating the principle of parsimony in more than one way. The Bhāṭṭa imagines first that the words have one kind of dispositional property, that of being able to produce in the hearer the cognition of their 'own' (individual) meanings. Second, the word-meanings themselves (objects, properties, actions) should then have the disposition to generate the hearer's cognition of the linkages among themselves. Moreover, the words must have another dispositional property for producing in the word-meanings such a (second) dispositonal property as would be capable of generating the cognition of the linkages. So the Bhāṭṭa view implies that there should be in all three (inferable) dispositional properties, two in the word itself and one in the word-meaning, in order that we can account for the verbal cognition of the whole sentence-meaning satisfactorily. If, however, we agree, along with the Prābhākara, that words themselves have a dispositional property—that of producing in the hearer a cognition of their 'own' meanings plus linkages—then we can practise the desired *economy* of dispositional properties (one instead of three). After all, such properties are *inferred* only to explain the observable circumstances. So if less would be sufficient for an adequate explanation, why infer more? Besides,

when we deal with language we can never find a word that is *only* a word, being completely isolated from other words, for at the end some sort of word such as 'is' or 'exists' will always be understood when one word is uttered or heard. Hence a cognition of its meaning will necessarily bring in the linkage, i.e. its connection with the meaning of the other word through association.

The dispute between the two groups rolled on for several centuries. Their arguments and counter-arguments became increasingly subtle and technical. At some point, the exponent of the Prābhākara view conceded that the isolated meaning of the word without the linkage can very well be *recollected* by the hearer as soon as the word is heard. (Recall my comment on *own* meaning in section V.) This facilitates our language-learning procedure. The Prābhākara confirmed: the isolated meaning, the object cow, from the word 'cow', is quickly recollected because of *intensity* and *recurrence*. But this recollection simply facilitates our awareness of the *proper* meaning of the word in the context, an item that is *semantically* relevant; we become aware of the object cow plus its possible relation, and the second awareness yields the knowledge of the connected sentence-meaning. With this concession, it was claimed, the Prābhākara theory about meaning became more defensible, and avoided the problem of sentence-holism as well as that of 'unconnectedness' which the extreme forms of atomism might involve.

If connected facts are not admitted as real entities 'out there', but at the same time it is claimed that words in a sentence designate such connected items, i.e., objects with linkage, and not objects as such, then this 'designation' relation of words is supposed to pick out what we may call *epistemic* objects, not the actual items or objects in the domain of the reals. It is our knowledge of such a 'designation' relation of words that gives us the knowledge of the sentence-meaning as a whole. This seems to call for a tentative distinction to be made between the *isolated* objects (the *ontological* domain) and what we may call a *semantic* domain which will include designata of words, such connected facts, the *epistemic* objects, i.e., objects with linkage. We are not however sure whether the Prābhākara would accept this consequence, but this seems to follow from his view.

Dummett (1981) repeatedly says that the context principle as applied to reference (as applied to sense, the principle seems to him unproblematic) created a *tension* in the kind of realism that informs Frege's whole philosophy (see also Matilal and Sen, 1989). The Prābhākara

view is an attempt to avoid a *crude* theory of meaning, which demands that the meanings of our words be construed as independent and isolated pieces of reality. I have shown that the Prābhākara can avoid this construal and still maintain realism in his ontology by confining his doctrine of meaning to the epistemological level; it becomes an epistemological thesis about the origin of our knowledge of sentence-meaning. The moral seems to be this. If we flout the context principle of Frege, as well as the Prābhākara view of connected facts as word-meanings (both views are different attempts to avoid problems of meaning-atomism), we are hard put to explain how we recognize the connectedness of these individual atoms in our judgements. In fact, this will be a general problem for any form of atomism, epistemological or ontological.

It is true that the context principle of Frege was formulated to answer presumably a different set of questions, but some of the philosophical issues raised by it were not entirely different from the issues raised by the age-old controversy between the Bhāṭṭa and the Prābhākara about how we grasp the (whole) meaning of the sentence. Among other things, Frege was concerned with the dismissal of the psychologistic interpretation of number-entities. That was apparently not the concern of the Indian philosophers I have talked about. It is however not clear whether Frege was making an epistemological point about how we grasp thoughts, or an ontological point about the unreality of parts in the context of the whole. He did seem to worry at times about how the whole manages to hold together. The Prābhākara, on the other hand, explicitly makes an epistemological point about how we grasp the sentence-meaning. By positing such semantic or epistemic objects as things, properties or actions with possible linkages constituting the domain of the meaning of words in a sentence, he steers clear of the two extremes: the Scylla of crude realism implicit in the extreme atomism of the Bhāṭṭa and the Charybdis of a sort of idealism implied by Bhartṛhari's holism. (For much of the above, see Matilal and Sen.)

11

TRANSLATION AND BHARTṚHARI'S CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE (*ŚABDA*)

I. TRANSLATION AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM

Inter-translatability has been recognized as a philosophical problem, for behind it lurks the question of inter-cultural understanding, trans-cultural interpretation and trans-cultural evaluation. In philosophy of language, the problem of translation (not simply in the form of 'radical' translation or 'radical' interpretation) has attracted the attention of many modern philosophers of very different persuasions (Quine, Wittgenstein and Derrida, to mention a few). This chapter deals first with what implication a notion of translation would have on the Indian grammarians, specially on Bhartṛhari's theory of language. The chapter contains occasional reference to grammatology and concludes with some comments on logocentrism.

II. ON TRANSLATABILITY

'What is language?' has increasingly been felt to be one of the trickiest questions of our time. Sometimes it has been asserted that language is the *object* of study of that discipline which we call 'linguistics' today. But then it becomes an ever movable peg upon which different linguists are supposed to hang their theories. What Bhartṛhari meant by *śabda* was not always absolutely clear. But he said a lot of things about it, or rather he left for posterity an extensive body of writing about it. And it is on the basis of such writing that we can speak today about Bhartṛhari's theory of 'speech' (*śabda*) or language. In my

* This chapter largely derives from a paper presented at a conference on 'Translation, Transference and Transformation' organized by J. Derrida and his colleagues in Paris during the Festival of India in France.

proposal to translate *śabda* as language I do not mean that language is always sonorous or that the essence of language consists in its sonority. For Bhartṛhari writes elaborately about the insonorous speech or the *speech-seed*, which constitutes the essence of *real* language. The idea may not be as commonplace as 'the dialogue of the self with itself' (derived from the Platonic phrase), or the 'silent speech' of the early Behaviourists. For Bhartṛhari, it is an all-important concept. (See ch. 8.)

Our journey into the past can never be complete and final. This is not because we can never exhaustively discover the contours of the past, the land that we have left behind, from the control of the materials that we now have at our disposal. Rather it is that we take *new* trips to the old land to see *new* landscapes from a *new* angle of vision. It is not that we cannot get always the cartography right, but that we try each time to get a new cartography.

Grammar was regarded as a central discipline in classical India. It was central to the study of the scriptures, rituals, logic and metaphysics. It was one of the *Vedāṅgas*, aids to the study of the *Vedas*; it was the 'gateway' (*mukha*) to other disciplines. Bhartṛhari was primarily a grammarian of the Pāṇinian school (and probably also a poet). He was responsible for a fundamental reappraisal of what we may call today the philosophy of grammar and the philosophy of language. His major work is called *Vākyapadīya* ('of Sentences and Words')—a book that consists of three different parts with about 2000 verses. (Some of the verses ascribed to him and cited by others are not to be found in the extant version. I-Tsing, the Chinese traveller, with his usual exaggeration records that this book consisted of 3700 verses.) Bhartṛhari developed a theory of speech or language which was unique and it evoked strong criticism from all quarters, the Naiyāyikas, the Buddhists, the Jainas and the Mīmāṃsakas. Still, he made his mark and exerted strong influence, indirectly upon others, but directly upon Kasmir Saivism, particularly on Utpala and Abhinavagupta (see ch. 12). I shall try here to introduce Bhartṛhari's theory of language, in order to see what implications it would have on our notion of 'translation', and I believe this enquiry to be worthwhile although it will be 'a journey into the past'.

Translation is an activity to which philosophers, social anthropologists and historians of ideas can hardly afford to be indifferent. As far as modern philosophical activity is concerned, this seems to be relevant not simply due to the obvious and trivial fact that philoso-

phers over the ages have written in various languages which are worlds apart. More importantly, some translational activity in a deeper sense is part of the accepted style of philosophizing. To put it blandly, 'translation' in a non-trivial sense is involved even when a philosopher tries, with whatever motivation, to *read* the writings of another philosopher, ancient or modern. The same material can have different *readings*, and thereby inevitably different *meanings*, different interpretations. The rather platitudinous air of this statement can be dispelled if we do neither of these two things: take 'meanings' or 'interpretations' too literally and presume there to be an essential difference between 'meanings' and 'readings'. Each *reading* is a creative formulation, and hence a translation based upon such a reading is a creative transformation. If we take Bhartṛhari's view of language and meaning seriously, we have to say that there cannot be a real transference of the pure *signifieds* or the 'virgin' meaning of the text into another, for this may be based upon the rather widespread but wrong presumption that meaning can stand in isolated glory apart from the (original) text itself. The very idea that meaning, thought or 'what is said', is isolatable from the speech or the text seems repugnant to Bhartṛhari's holistic conception of language. Hence the so-called translation in the sense of 'transfer' of thought from one garb to another seems impossible in this theory.

The received doctrine, which would be ascribed to the Nyāya realists, was that there is an inherent distinction between the word (signifier) and the object (signified). Surprisingly this was not very different from the general consensus among the traditional Western exponents of modern linguistics. Language is often uncritically thought to be a vehicle of thought or meaning. And from this flows the pervasive idea that in a multilingual world, the same thought is or can be conveyed by different expressions which are distinguishable parts of different languages. It is probably what a modern philosopher, Jacques Derrida, would call the metaphysicians' age-old desire to search for a 'transcendental signified', that is, a concept independent of language, that forces upon us the duality and opposition of the signifier and the signified. The duality that is foisted upon us has generated the platitude that the *pure* signified is what remains constant between different translations just as in a change of currency the value of the money is supposed to remain intact. In the light of Bhartrhari's idea, this is a platitude that we would do well to give up. For Bhartṛhari the signifier-signified duality (*vāk* and *artha*) is more a

fiction than a reality. It is *vikalpa*, a convenient fiction, but it lacks the ultimate or absolute truth-value. The two are, for Bhartṛhari, identical. The imagined duality is a useful ploy, and in many ways seems to be an indispensable ploy, to facilitate understanding. But its essence is given by its contextuality; hence beyond the context it loses its ultimate value. It is a ploy as well as a play. It is called a *vikalpa* in the sense of being a game or a play where we have rules which will have truth-values, but not when the game is over. Thus it is that Bhartṛhari's holistic doctrine of language, of which the identity of the *vācaka* (signifier) and the *vācya* (signified) is also a part, requires us to give up the search for any independent 'transcendent' meaning as the translational constant, as the invariant in variable languages, and yet the same view allows that there could be a situational meaning or *vācya* that would be correlated with different linguistic expressions or *vācakas* (signifiers) which would be deemed as intelligibly equivalent. Since linguistic expressions are not regarded in this theory as mere conveyor-belts for thoughts, there cannot be any absolute transposition of virgin thoughts from one language to another. Each thought is already a part and parcel of its so-called 'verbal' cloak. They are not separable. Like the mythical suit of armour which was 'in-born' with Karṇa in the *Mahābhārata*, thought and language are born together.

One may ask the obvious question: How are we to distinguish good translations from bad ones, how to determine distortion or even falsification by translation? For it would be extremely counter-intuitive to say that one translation is as good as any other. (For the moment, we are not talking about Quine's view of translation.) The tentative answer seems to be this. The goodness or badness of a translation, the distortion, falsity or correctness of it, would not be determined simply by the inter-linguistic or intra-linguistic semantic rules, but by the entire situation of each translation with all its uniqueness, that is, by the kind of total reactions, effects, motivations and preferences it generates on that occasion. It is a matter of common knowledge that a translator may deliberately or unconsciously choose the translational forms or expressions, in order to create the intended result, and within certain limits this choice may become tolerable. If it is intolerable the translation is bad. We can decide that the translation is bad or distorted to the extent it becomes intolerable.

I use 'signifier-signifed', which is the terminology of modern linguists, for the Sanskrit '*vācaka-vācya*'. Despite obvious similarity, it

is not fair to conflate the two terminologies and I am not attempting to compare or identify them. To introduce looseness in usage, I shall use 'signification' and 'designation' almost interchangeably. This will fit my purpose, for in Sanskrit we talk about only one word-object relation: *vācya-vācaka-bhāva*. There may simply be very distant resonance here of the rather technical use of the *signifier-signified* distinction of the Western linguists.

III. BHARTṚHARI ON *ŚABDA*

I shall present about a dozen verses from Bhartṛhari's text, *Vākya-padīya*. His theory of *śabda* (language) is a very complex one. For him language is an activity—a type of activity in which all human beings, in fact all sentient beings, engage. The Sanskrit name for this activity is *śabdanā* or *śabdana-vyāpāra*. It is 'languageing'. In Bhartṛhari's metaphor, it is the very vibration (*spanda*) of consciousness.

This theory has many facets. (1) Bhartṛhari tells us that language or *śabda* plays an indispensable part in our cultural life at different levels of consciousness. In fact, it makes the transaction between sentient beings possible. (2) He further asserts that *śabda* or language is the basis of the distinction between the sentient and the insentient. (3) All thought, all awareness is intertwined with 'languageing', for there cannot be any manifestation of awareness unless it is illuminated by *śabda* (see ch. 12). (4) There are two levels of language or *śabda* which all linguists must recognize, the implicit or the *inner* speech and the *articulate* noise. The former he called *sphoṭa*, the latter *nāda*, 'sound', 'noise'. The former is more real, it is the causal basis of the latter (see ch. 8). In another formulation, the latter is said to be the 'transformation' of the former. (5) Above all, Bhartṛhari propounds a cosmological thesis. The whole universe (or we should say the linguistic universe), consisting of two different types of things, the *vācyas*, bits and pieces of the *constructed* world to which language refers, and the linguistic expressions, the *vācaka* (signifiers), has evolved out of one principle called the Word-Essence, *śabda-tattva*, the Eternal Verbum, *śabda-brahman*, the ever-extending consciousness of the sentient. We may discount this point as a theological or metaphysical bias, but there may be an important truth implicit in it here. Our *perceived* world is also an *interpreted* world. And this interpretation is invariably in terms of some language or other. Interpretation is 'languageing'. Bhartṛhari believes that both language and the 'world' it

purports to refer to (and this 'world' by his own explicit admission may or may not coincide with the external, actual world) *form* an indivisible, unitary whole. In the light of such a theory it is easy to see how the *vācaka-vācya* (signifier-signified) distinction is artificial, provisional and ultimately collapsible into a unity from which it initially arises.

The first verse of the enormous text, *Vākyapadīya*, runs thus:

> The essence of *language* has no beginning and no end. It is the imperishable Brahman, the ultimate consciousness, which is *transformed* in the form of meanings and which facilitates the functioning of the world. (Verse I, 1)

An absolute beginning of language is untenable. Language is continuous and co-terminous with the human or any sentient being. A simple argument is formulated in support of this point. The argument is not very different from the early Mīmāṃsaka argument against the conventionalists, the Naiyāyikas, who held that language is an arbitrary and conventional tool, and hence the word-object relationship is created by and learnt through convention for there does not exist any real connection between the word 'cow' and the object *cow*. According to Bhartṛhari, language is underived and the word-thought relationship is *given* to us; it is eternal. We cannot say that the word-thought relation was created by some humans or even by God in the long forgotten past, for we do not have any record of such convention. Besides, convention itself presupposes the prior presence of language, which is again sought to be derived from convention. This is patently circular. Invoking God does not help to avoid circularity because even God cannot make His intention known or create convention without using language. We may quote J. Derrida's epigram: 'Everything begins by referring back, that is to say, does not begin.'

The verses of Bhartṛhari quoted below make his idea of *śabda* clear. Some of these verses have been quoted and briefly commented upon in chapter 8. I will repeat them, nevertheless, to underline different aspects of their significance.

> Those who study *śabda* (linguists?) comprehend two types of *śabda* among the linguistic sounds (*upādāna-śabda* as opposed to other noises). One is the causal basis for producing sounds and the other designates the object (= meaning). (Verse I, 44)

This may inadvertently be the beginning of the *sphoṭa-nāda* distinction

that is very central to Bhartṛhari's view of language. There is another verse here which is omitted in the edited text but noted by the commentary. It is more explicit about this distinction:

> The *śabda* that is designative of meaning is an individual unit, a sequenceless whole, but it is revealed through the divided items (noisy realities produced in proper sequences). The latter gets intermixed with the object/meaning for it constitutes the very nature of the object/meaning. (Verse I, 44)

Nāda, sometimes called *dhvani*, stands for the sound, the 'bang', the sonority of language, while *sphoṭa* by way of contrast means literally the language in the form of an 'explosive'—the explosive prior to the bang. For Bhartṛhari the latter is the real *śabda* 'language', of which the former is a causal transformation. Basically, the necessity of admitting *sphoṭa* arises in this way. How are we to explain the understanding of a complete meaning from sounds which are uttered in a temporal sequence (or, letters written in spatial sequence)? *Sphoṭa* is initially the Sanskrit grammarians' answer to this question. Between the two levels of language, *nāda* and *sphoṭa*, there is the relationship of the manifester and the manifested. *Nāda* makes *sphoṭa* manifest while it is also the causal transformation of the latter.

> Since *nāda* arises in sequence, *sphoṭa*, which has neither a former nor a latter stage, and which is sequenceless, is apprehended (or is born) as if having a sequence as well as parts. (Verse I, 48)

The two levels are, however, not entirely separate, for the essential properties of one are transferred to the other, and thus they are two sides of the same *linguistic* coin.

> Just as the reflected image, although it resides in another place, seems to share the operation (i.e. movements of the waves in water), the *sphoṭa* and the *nāda* share the (linguistic) properties in the same way. (Verse I, 49)

Bhartṛhari uses several analogies to explain the nature of language as he conceives it. I shall quote a couple of them here.

> The potentiality (*kratu*?) that is called language is like the yolk of the pea-hen's egg. It develops (being articulated) into the form of an act where it obtains parts and sequences. (Verse I, 51).

The idea is that the original *kratu* called language is a unity, without parts and sequences. But when transformed it seems to have parts and sequences, even imperfections (due to pronunciation by human agents).

> Just as a figure (the original model) is grasped by the painter's single awareness, and is painted upon the canvas as another complete, unitary figure, language or linguistic unit (*śabda*) has likewise all these three stages. (Verse I, 52)

The idea is tentatively this: the original model = the original linguistic unit, a sentential expression along with what it conveys; the image grasped by the painter's mind = the linguistic reality in the speaker's mind; the painting = the speaker's articulation.

Bhartṛhari mentions some of his predecessors' views regarding the *sphoṭa-nāda* distinction. His own view seems to have crystallized out of explanation and criticism of these views. I have already discussed these views in chapter 8. Of the views examined, one (verse 93) says that *sphoṭa* is the universal or the linguistic type, sentence-type or word-type as opposed to their tokens (sounds), while another (verse 94) says that the *sphoṭa* or language is in fact *avikārya* 'unmodifiable' or 'immutable' and sounds which have modifications (good or bad, high or low, strong or weak) cause the perception or comprehension of the *sphoṭa* just as light causes perception of objects. In the course of his critique of these prevalent views, Bhartṛhari announces (verse 121) how language has a pervasive influence on human behaviour:

> The idea that something is to be done in this world depends upon language. Even the child (when he acts) from the residual traces of his (previous) births has such understanding as is language-dependent. (Verse I, 121)

It is also argued in the same context that unless the child has already the language *in* him he cannot make the effort to reproduce it through his vocal organs. Hence language is not learnt as a novel and external thing but it is an inherent constituent of our awareness, about which we become gradually conscious when the so-called learning procedure starts.

Bhartṛhari seems to assert that there is an inseparable connection between language and awareness. This thesis is expressed as follows:

> There is no awareness in this world without its being intertwined

> with language. All cognitive awareness appears as if it is interpenetrated with language. (Verse I, 123)
>
> If the language-impregnated nature of awareness went away from it, then a cognition would not manifest (any object), for that (language-impregnated nature) is the distinguishing nature of our cognitive awareness. (Verse I, 124)

The above may imply the rather strong Bhartṛhari thesis:

(B1) All cognitive episodes are equivalent to verbal thoughts.

Or, it may imply the weaker claim:

(B2) Most cognitive episodes with which we deal are invariably verbal thoughts at some implicit level.

There are two sides to this thesis. One is its epistemological implication, which I shall discuss elaborately in the next chapter. The other is a semantic issue: what happens to the semantic relation between word and object.

In terms of such loaded metaphors of 'illumination' and 'consciousness', one can put the matter as follows: the illuminative power of consciousness is always intertwined with its *vāg-rūpatā* or *śabdanā* or 'languageing'. Taking some help from Kashmir Saivism (Utpala and Abhinava), one can round up this theory of awareness and say that each awareness-episode has two *natural* powers, the power to reveal or illuminate (*prakāśa*) and the power to discriminate or differentiate (*vimarśa*). The second power which is equivalent to 'languageing' or differentiation through verbalizability, is never found without the first. This seems to imply that if the pure sensory grasp is one where awareness is not isolatable from what one is aware of, and where what we are aware of is not conceptualizable or verbalizable, then such pure sensation is an impossibility. It is however well-known that some major philosophical traditions, among them the Buddhists and the sense-data theorists, argued that such awareness exists. Bhartṛhari's argument is that if the so-called sensory grasp penetrates into the level of awareness it already differentiates the grasped object through 'languageing' although at a very implicit level. For more on this, see the next chapter. The *vācya* cannot figure in any awareness without the presence of the *vācaka* already in it.

IV. BHARTṚHARI ON WORD-OBJECT CONNECTION

The relation of *vācya* and *vācaka* has been the subject matter of discussion in various ways in Bhartṛhari's writing. I shall try to give a brief review of his position on this point. The said relation is one of identity,

but from another point of view it may be called the 'signification' relation, for which the Sanskrit name is *vācya-vācaka-bhāva*. The first verse of chapter 3 of part III of *Vākyapadīya* says:

> From the utterance of words, the speaker's idea, the external object and the form of the word itself are understood. There stands (therefore) a relation between them (utterance of the word and the other three).

Immediately after this rather enigmatic statement, Bhartṛhari repeats the thesis that the word's own form is the most intimate *meaning* that is understood from the utterance of the word-token. This point was already established by elaborate argument in Part One of his book. The relation between the word and such a meaning of the word or any linguistic unit, a phrase or a sentence, is undoubtedly seen to be natural, non-derivative and eternally fixed. Hence if we take the first item as meaning, it is also not too much to say that the word and what it means are *identical*. The second item in this list offers more interesting possibilities. I believe this to be also Bhartṛhari's own view, which may be stated as follows. The linguistic expression (and in Bhartṛhari's own view the primary unit is the sentence, not its word-constituents) designates or signifies the speaker's idea or thought, having first designated or signified its own form. The objects meant are assumed by the realist to constitute the external objects or the 'furniture' of the external world. But Bhartṛhari nowhere explicitly argues for this position although he mentions it as one of the standard views. He is not a realist in this sense. For him the object meant is what is grasped by the speaker's awareness. So it is the item that figures in his awareness. Our activities, which may be prompted by language, deal with external realities, a cow or a horse, but language does not *mean* or *signify* them. They are nevertheless understood at the utterance of the word because otherwise our activities will not be possible. Being asked for food we cannot very well present the speaker's 'mental' food! But nevertheless linguistic signification refers to a separate realm.

In this connection, Bhartṛhari develops an interesting critique of what is usually understood as the signification relation and of relation in general. This has been nicely dealt with by H. Herzberger and R. Herzberger (1981), who have called it 'Bhartṛhari's paradox'. Bhartṛhari argued that the so-called signification relation is unsignifiable, for if we could signify it, we would turn it into an object and that would require a further signification relation. This follows from the general notion of relation which can be articulated as a general

axiom about relation: no relation can be one of its relata. However, Bhartṛhari points out that the notion of signification relation enters into our consciousness through the use of genitive endings:

> This is the 'signifier' (*vācaka*) of that, that is the 'signified' (*vācya*) of this. The thatness (*tattva*) of connection between the word and what it means is thus understood from the genitive ending. Hence its own-nature (thatness) is 'designated'. (Verse III, 3.3)

A further point, which justifies the above thesis of unsignifiability, is this. An item is usually signified by a signifier, 'linguistic expression', on the basis of some property or aspect belonging to the signified object, but since the characters or aspects of the signification relation (or relation in general) are completely exhausted by its two relata, it is completely 'colourless'—in fact too colourless to be signified at all.

> (But) there is no (proper) designator of the (said) relation (of signification) that speaks of (or designates) it on the basis of its own feature (*dharma*). (For) due to its being totally undermined by others (its two relata), its own feature is not designated. (Verse III, 3.4)

The signification relation is really unsignifiable and it is also a *natural* bond which makes the designator and the designated identical. Bhartṛhari also describes, with the help of some early semi-mythical accounts of language, how the designator and the designated remain in the mind of the sentient completely undifferentiated at the initial stage (called *paśyantī*) and how the duality articulates in the third stage through an intermediate stage (called *madhyamā* = intermediate), where the speaker (and not anybody else) 'sees' the difference although the two are not yet differentiated. Thus at the third level (called *vaikharī*) the audible speech is generated. Bhartṛhari argues repeatedly, however, that since the speaker utters (or even writes) the designator in order to convey or communicate the designated, each such utterance (or writing) carries an implicit assertion of the type 'this (the word) *is* (identical with) that (the thing)'. And this is cited as a *proof* of the inherent identity of the designator and the designated.

V. LOGOCENTRISM AND THE SCRIPTIC BIAS

After this rather sketchy account of Bhartṛhari's text, let me conclude by making some general comments. It would be relevant today to talk about the apparent opposition between the speech and the writing,

the audible parts and the visible inscriptions that are supposed to represent language. Modern Western linguists (notably Saussure and others) have been eloquent about the primacy of speech or spoken words (as opposed to writing) as the indispensable foundation of linguistics. Saussure condemned his nineteenth century predecessors, the grammarians, for their 'scriptism' which presumably conflated writing with language, letters with sounds. This has been called by Saussure 'the tyranny of writing', even a 'monstrosity' or distortion. In spite of this dire warning, some recent linguists (Harris, 1980, 8; Lyons, 1968, 9), have shown that this *scriptist bias* has persisted in many corners of the field of linguistics, for the temptation to analyse speech into writing (Lyons has called it the 'orthological dogma') is one to which many modern linguists have inadvertently succumbed. Anybody familiar with J. Derrida's writing, for example, knows the opposite view which regards logocentrism (particularly the centrality of speech or the sonic element in language) as a bias which has suppressed free thinking about language and retarded our reflection on the origin and status of writing and its proper place in our study of language. The purpose of this critique of the so-called Western metaphysics, the 'deconstruction' of the texts of Saussure, Rousseau, etc., to expose the dangers and destructive effects of logocentrism, has been to develop a science of writing called grammatology. But this is not to say that writing is better than speech. Rather, the attempt, as I understand it, is to show that the said opposition is an illusion since language, or the origin and development of language, has historically been as much involved with structured speech as with structured writing, 'for it is indeed history that one must stop in order to protect language from writing' (Derrida, 1976, 42).

From the point of view of Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭa* or the notion that language is an integral part of our consciousness, we may say that both speech and writing can alike be the 'illuminator' of the *sphoṭa*. One is not primary and the other does not particularly *distort* the *sphoṭa*. In fact both can equally 'distort' the *sphoṭa* in a non-pejorative sense. Both 'transform' (cf. *vikāra*) the untransformable, unmodifiable *sphoṭa*, which is part and parcel of everybody's consciousness. In the light of Bhartṛhari's theory, therefore, both the translations and the original (whether vocal or written) are in some sense transformations.

In spite of Bhartṛhari's explicit use of *śabda* and speech, I would argue that he was not guilty of 'logocentrism' in Derrida's sense. In fact, in Indian tradition, where oral transmission of the *Vedas* (wrongly

called the Scriptures, for the Sanskrit term is *Śruti* = something to be heard) was the norm, where oral recitation of the Buddha's dialogues (the Buddhist scriptures where each section always starts 'Thus, I have heard . . .') lasted for centuries after the death of the Buddha (and the same is true of Jainism), and where oral transmission of other texts called *śāstras* continued for a long time and texts were first memorized by students before any explanation or understanding was attempted, it is no wonder that the word for language was the word for sound (*śabda*). All these facts of the Indian tradition might have been historically conditioned because scholars faced extreme difficulties due to climatic and other conditions, for example the monsoons, in preparing and preserving writing materials. But the tradition, I argue, is free from the *fault* of logocentrism. For logocentrism, as I see it, flourishes and derives nourishment from the explicit condemnation (and also 'damnation'—it has been called a *sin*) of writing, otherwise 'speech' cannot be promoted to the prime place. And for this point one can turn to Derrida. It is obvious to any reader of Derrida how this 'condemnation', in a paradoxical manner, provides ammunition for Derrida's deconstruction of the texts of Saussure and Rousseau. As far as I know, such condemnation of writing was conspicuous by its absence in the Indian tradition in which Bhartṛhari flourished. Hence the *sphoṭa* theory of language was not 'logocentric' in any damning sense. As I have said, both sonic and graphic symbols can be the 'illuminator' of the *sphoṭa*; and being the illuminator either of them can be identified with the illuminated. Both speech and writing can be in perfect harmony (where talk of 'violence' would be pointless) in Bhartṛhari's holistic view of language.

12

COGNITION AND LANGUAGE

I. TWO VERSIONS OF BHARTṚHARI'S THESIS

Bhartṛhari, the fifth-century grammarian-philosopher of India, propounded the thesis that verbalizability (or, verbal or linguistic activity at some implicit level) is immanent in our cognitive faculty (*VP.* I, verses 123–4, see ch. 11). In fact it is claimed that the cognitive faculty operates necessarily with the verbal faculty. Speech or language is not just a convenient but inessential conveyor belt of thought, rather it constitutes a vital part of thought. This does not mean that we always make audible sounds whenever we cognize, think or perceive anything. Nor is it proper to say that we make 'inaudible' noises as we become aware of things or facts. On the other hand, it does imply that we verbalize, at some deeper level, as we cognize, and we cognize as we verbalize. To put it bluntly, a cognition does not COGNIZE if it does not verbalize, at least at some implicit level. The question is: how are we supposed to understand this thesis?

If Bhartṛhari is right then it is proper to claim that a so-called private and subjective cognitive event is equivalent to the occurrence of a verbal thought, and if a thought is verbalized, that is, expressed in language, it breaks through the 'privacy' enclosure and becomes public property that is communicable and inter-subjectively available. What happens to one's private sensory experience or sensation? A tentative answer from Bhartṛhari's point of view would be this: as soon as the sensory reaction stops being simply a physical or physiological event and matures into sensory awareness, as soon as it penetrates into the cognitive level, it becomes pregnant with WORD, ŚABDA, or verbalizability. But this is, perhaps, putting the thesis too strongly.

Let us consider two versions of Bhartṛhari's thesis, the strong and the weak. The strong version is:

B1: All cognitive episodes are equivalent to verbal thoughts.

This will exclude many primitive, pre-linguistic, non-verbal experiences from the domain of awareness-episode and declare them to be non-cognitive in character. It is somewhat doubtful whether Bhartṛhari intended his thesis in this form. A weaker version will allow, however, for certain primitive, pre-linguistic, cognitive episodes among which we can put the so-called pure sensory experience, 'raw feels' etc. The weaker version is:

B2: Most cognitive episodes are verbal thoughts at some implicit level.

However, the argument cited to make B1 seem plausible is the following (*VP.* I, verse 124): the revelatory or illuminative power of consciousness is necessarily intertwined with *vāg-rūpatā*, the power of articulating the grasped object in language. This power is natural to awareness. Since an awareness-episode has to reveal (*prakāśa*) some object or other, it has to contain the seed of verbalization or verbal discrimination (*vimarśa*).

II. INTERPRETATION OF THE COMMENTARY

I shall quote a few sentences from the *vṛtti*— sentences which cannot be easily made sense of. The difficulty of the style of the *vṛtti* is well-known and sometimes baffling! Since K. A. Subrahmania Iyer translated the *vṛtti*, I have chosen only one or two cases where Iyer's translation is not clear, if not entirely misleading. To make my point clear, I shall attempt some sort of explanatory translation, and this will make my minimal differences from Iyer's interpretation obvious.

Text 1: Just as the *Śabdabhāvanā* (residual traces of linguistic ability) where explicit forms are withdrawn (*saṃhṛtarūpā*) cannot accomplish anything (*kāryam na kriyate*), similarly non-conceptual (*avikalpaka*) cognition is of no use.

Text 2: (This is the most baffling sentence. I shall divide it into 5 parts.) (a) For example, when one walks quickly and touches grass and pebbles, a (tactile) awareness arises. (b) But even though such an awareness arises (*satyapi jñāne*), that is indeed a unique, vague (*kācid eva*; *kācid* may mean either 'unique' or 'vague') state of cognition in which (*yasyām*) an object's nature (*vastvātmā*) is said to be cognized (*jñāyate ity abhidhīyate*) provided the object is tinged with awareness (*jñānānugata*) and its explicit form shines forth (*vyaktarūpapratyayāvabhāsa*). (c) This state (of cognition) contains the ready or about-to-sprout (*abhimukhībhūta*) seed of the residual traces of language

(*śabdabhāvanābīja*). (d) There are two types of words, articulate words that are speakable and non-articulate words that are unspeakable (*ākhyeyarūpāṇām anākhyeyarūpāṇām ca śabdānām*) [I take 'inarticulate words' to refer to the linguistic ability of babies, for their actions of sucking their mother's breasts, etc., are prompted by such word-impregnated awareness; cf. *anākhyeya-śabda-nibandhanā bālānām pravṛttiḥ, Vṛtti* on verse 113]. (e) And there arises denotative power of the words regulated by each denotatum (*pratyarthaniyatāsu śaktiṣu*) while the object is picked out (*upagṛhyamāna*) and given a form (*ākriyamāna*) by that cognition which is impregnated with words (*śabdānuviddhena*) and empowered with that denotative power [common to the words] (*śaktyanupātinā*).

Text 3: Speech (*vāc*) indwells or inheres in all cases of awareness just as illumination does in fire and conciousness in the mind (*antaryāmin*). The subtle nature of *vāc* (speech) [i.e., *sūkṣmo vāgdharmaḥ*] penetrates and permeates even such states as lack ostensible mental activity (*asañcetitāvasthā*). Even the epistemologically first-born (*prathamopanipātin*) illumination (*prakāśa*) of the external objects (*bāhyārtha*), since it cannot apprehend the *nimitta* or the special features that cause our usage of certain words (to denote the objects, such as 'white' or 'cow'), make the self-same object (*vastusvarūpamātra*) appear in our awareness (*pratyavabhāsayati*) by some unspecifiable designation such as 'this' or 'that' (*idam tad ity ayapadeśyayā vṛttyā*).

III. ARGUMENT FOR THE THEORY

These passages give an outline of a theory which has been variously defended and argued in many places of the *kārikas* and the *Vṛtti*. Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, proponents of the Kashmir Saivaite school, assimilated this theory into their metaphysical doctrine of Śiva-consciousness, although they supported what is called *śabdādhyāsa-vāda* as opposed to Bhartṛhari's *śabdādvaita-vāda*. I shall use the remarks of Utpala and Abhinava to expound further the thesis of the language-impregnated nature of awareness. For it has some important implications for the theories of perceptual awareness.

Most Indian philosophers, the Buddhists, the Naiyāyikas, and the Mīmāṃsakas, have argued for ages that there are two types of perceptual awareness, *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka*, and by almost common consent the first is the sensory awareness where no concept and hence no language or word (*śabda*) can appear, and the second is

one where words, concepts and universals are essentially present. The usual argument is that the epistemologically first-born has to do only with the pure object, the given, where *śabda* or word has no place, and the clearest examples are supposedly the body's 'raw feels', the mute's awareness, etc. Bhartṛhari, and following him Utpala and Abhinava, maintained the opposite view; viz., that even in the so-called *nirvikalpaka* 'non-conceptual' state, the awareness is interpenetrated with *śabda* (word) or *vāg-rūpatā*. For, it is argued, without such *vāg-rūpatā* (word-impregnation) which Bhartṛhari calls *pratyavamarśa*, 'determination by word' (I, verse 124), and the Kashmiris call *vimarśa*, or sometimes *parāmarśa*, an awareness cannot be *aware* of an object, and illumination will not illuminate (*na prakāśaḥ prakāśeta*).

This theory of cognition claims that there are two inherent, inalienable, mutually complementary powers or properties of any awareness-episode, *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*. For lack of any convenient English terms, let us call them 'illumination' and 'discrimination' (see ch. 11). Now 'illumination' means removal of darkness but simple removal of darkness does not reveal the object unless one is able to distinguish the outline of the object from its immediate surroundings or environment. Throwing a flood of light upon a canvas is only half of the whole process of showing the object; the picture of the object must be sufficiently distinguished from the background to make it visible. If *prakāśa* is the flood of light, *vimarśa* is what makes the object distinguishable and distinct. An awareness is thus both *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, or to use modern Wittgensteinian jargon, an awareness is both showing and saying. The so-called pre-linguistic grasp of the object cannot be firm unless the object is sufficiently distinguished, and if it is sufficiently distinguished, *vimarśa* has already set in, and a *śabda-bhāvanā* (penetration by word) is implicit. A pure *prakāśa* (illumination) without *vimarśa* (discrimination) is impossible in theory. In fact, it is not even like what such Western philosophers as Immanuel Kant or Nelson Goodman say, that perception without conception is mute and conception without perception is blind. It is rather like saying that perception without conception is blind and conception without perception is mute. (See also Matilal, 1986, ch. 10.)

Some empirical arguments have been cited in favour of this not too obvious thesis. Bhartṛhari has said that even a newborn baby acts, cries, sucks its mother's breasts, etc. by virtue of an awareness where the seed of *śabdabhāvanā* or 'word-penetration' must have

been sown. Implicit in such argument are a special theory of action and a theory of awareness, and their interrelationship. All our activities are implicitly prompted by some specific awareness of some purpose or other. The instinctual awareness of babies, awareness that prompts them to act, to cry or even to make the effort to articulate their first words, must be a sort of awareness where the purpose and the method to achieve the purpose are distinguished and it presupposes *vimarśa* (discrimination) and hence *śabdabhāvanā* (penetration by word).

IV. A CRITIQUE OF THE THEORY

Critics, mainly the Buddhists, the Naiyāyikas and the Mīmāṃsakas, would strongly disapprove of Bhartṛhari's thesis above. I shall, therefore, supplement Bhartṛhari's arguments with those suggested by Utpala and Abhinava. Utpala says that the very nature (*svabhāva*) of illumination (*avabhāsa, prakāśa*) is *vimarśa* (discrimination) as it has been recognized by others (such as Bhartṛhari), for otherwise cognitive illumination would be as inert, material and passive as a *jaḍa* (inanimate) object, for example a crystal or a mirror (*Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-kārikā*, 1.5.11). In *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-kārikā* 1.5.19, Utpala says that even in sensory awareness (*sākṣātkāra*) there is *vimarsa* (discrimination), for otherwise how would instantaneous running away have been possible (on seeing a snake, for example) for someone who has not done any *pratisandhāna* 'active thinking'? This *pratisandhāna* is a form of *vimarśa* (discrimination) and can be articulated as a consideration (*parāmarśa*) of the form: 'This is dangerous', 'I must act quickly', etc. Abhinava says about *anusandhāna* or *pratisandhāna* (active thinking): *idam iṣṭam idam iṣyate, idaṃ ca eṣaṇiyam iti hanopādāneccha anusandhānena upalakṣitam* (*Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī* p. 233, II). ('This is desired', 'This will be desired', and 'This is desirable'—such desire to obtain or to avoid is indicated by the word '*anusandhāna*').

Abhinava formulates the following argument to explain Utpala: in our instantaneous running, speaking, etc., our preceding perception cannot be differentiated or separated from the volitional element, for otherwise there would not be that immediacy or instantaneousness. For if volition follows consideration which follows perceptual grasp, there would certainly be a delayed action. Now, a volitional element necessitates the fact that *vimarśa* (discrimination) is present in such perception, because *vimarśa* always regulates the volition and the volitional element in turn regulates the (motivated) action.

Abhinava elaborately discusses the relevant criticism of his opponents represented mainly by Dharmakīrti who would reject any possibility of 'discrimination by word' (*vimarśa, vikalpa*, or *śabda*) contaminating the purity of *nirvikalpaka*, i.e., sensory awareness. I shall give only a synopsis of Abhinava's detailed analysis of Dharmakīrti's argument. First, Dharmakīrti would argue that the object that flashes in our awareness (*pratibhāsate, gṛhyate*) is not identical with the object that is determined or ascertained by *śabda* (*adhyavasīyate, vimṛśyate*), and hence the sensory perception cannot coincide with *vikalpa* or word-impregnated awareness or construction. Several points are raised to support this issue of ultimate separation of what is apprehensible (*grāhya* or *pratibhāsamāna*) and what is determinable or distinguishable by word (*adhyavaseya*). For example, in *Pramāṇavārttika* (III, 194, ff) it is said that sense perception arises from the capacity of the object (*arthasāmarthya*) whereas the word-impregnated awareness is given by the following sequence: sensation leading to the awakening of *saṃskāra* (memory-impression), leading to the remembering of *saṃketa*, i.e. 'convention of learning word-meaning', leading finally to 'discrimination or determination by word', *vikalpa* or *śabda-yojanā*. Abhinava comments with a touch of irony that the sensory perception is in this way like the great-grandfather of *vikalpa*. Of these, the Buddhist would agree to eliminate the third element, for the awakening of memory-impression (*saṃskāra*) would be enough for 'discrimination by word' *sabda-yojanā* to arise.

In reply to this thesis of ultimate separation of the 'graspable' (*grāhya*) and the 'determinable' (*adhyavaseya*), both Utpala and Abhinava say that this is contradicted by the 'self-awareness' (*svasaṃvedana*) doctrine of the Buddhists themselves. For each awareness is said to be aware of itself, and hence in a perception which is self-aware both what is revealed or apprehended (*pratibhāsamāna*) and what is determined or ascertained (*adhyavaseya*) must be the self-same awareness. As regards the above point about determination by word (*śabda-yojanā*) being delayed by the intervention of learning the word-meaning, its necessary causal condition, it is said by Abhinava that such determination by word might have other causal conditions, and hence it may not always arise from the remembering of the *saṃketa* or convention. In fact Utpala and Abhinava say that the kind of determination by word that is needed in the epistemologically first perception, can arise from what is called *manaskāra*, i.e. mental attention, which, the Buddhist agrees, is associated with perception. The

Abhidharma says that the concept of *manaskāra* is *cittābhoga*, 'expansion of the mind'. *Manaskāra* is also the fixation of the (usually fleeting) mind, *avahitatvalakṣaṇa*. In the causal condition of perceptual awareness, mental attention or *manaskāra* is to be included side by side with faultlessness of the eyes, adequacy of light and the position of the object at a proper distance. Here, Abhinava says, just as the object accounts for the *pratibhāsa*, 'appearance', of the object in the awareness, the *manaskāra*, 'mental attention', accounts for the *vimarśa*, i.e., the 'distinguishing' of the same, resulting in a full-fledged perceptual awareness. In fact, 'mental attention' is defined by Abhinava as the readiness for the 'distinguishing' act (cf. *vimarśonmukhatā*). In this way, the two aspects of perception, the act of apprehension and the act of determination (*prakāśa* and *vimarśa*) are not incompatible with each other and hence can arise together because (and when) either has its own causal antecedent present at the same time. The *manaskāra* (mental attention) impregnates the perception with subtle word-seeds, and this is called the *pratisaṃhṛta-rūpa-śabda-yojanā*, 'a very contracted or primitive form of ascertainment through words' or an 'ascertainment through words withdrawn to themselves'. For such *śabda-yojanā* (ascertainment through words), a prior *saṃketa* is not needed.

The Buddhist points out that the child's first perception cannot be thus impregnated with the word-seed, for the child does not have even the *saṃketa*, i.e. conventional word-meaning. Abhinava says that the child's first perception cannot be completely innocent of 'determination by word' for otherwise it would be impossible to explain satisfactorily his attempt to articulate a word through his vocal organ and to learn the conventional meaning. A *saṃketa-grahaṇa* (learning of the conventional meaning of words) takes the following form: looking at a cow the child learns the use of the word 'cow' from instructions such as 'This is a cow' or 'This is called a cow'. Here ascription of the word, or even the predicate cow, would be impossible unless there is a presentation of the subject of the sentence by *vimarśa* or *parāmarśa* (determination). For the presentation of the subject in the sentence the speaker uses 'this', and this is clearly a *vimarśa*. The child also understands the subject by some similar *vimarśa*—an implicitly word-impregnated awareness. Explicit use of the word is not necessary, as it has been already emphasized. Even the pointing of the finger or nodding of the head would represent *vimarśa*, i.e., word-impregnated awareness. Abhinava says that sometimes we

clearly learn the conventional meaning of a word where the object is identified by another word: 'a cuckoo is called *pika*', 'a cat is called pussy', and so on. From this we can generalize that when we learn even the *saṃketa* of the first word in our life, the object is also identified, i.e., discriminated for us, by some *vimarśa* where the word-seed is present, and such *vimarśa* is made possible not by a prior learning of *saṃketa* but by what has been called *manaskāra* (mental attention).

The situation is sometimes reminiscent of the nativist theory in the Western tradition. In a way it also smacks of the Socratic quip: Learning is nothing but remembering. But it is more important to understand the emphasis that this theory puts elsewhere: on the particular nature of the cognitive activity. Mental attention is an essential causal condition of each cognitive awareness, and since the child's sensory perception is also cognitive in nature, the sense-object or the sense-given must also be sufficiently differentiated to be tinged with *vimarśa* or *vikalpa* or *śabdanā*, if not with the usual word (say a 'cow'), with at least 'this' or 'that'.

Dharmakīrti has said in his *Pramāṇa-vārttika* that when we suspend all our *cintā*, 'thinking', and when the inner faculty is inert, the eye will be able to see the object but no 'discrimination by words' will be possible at that stage. Abhinava says in his reply that this state (when all thoughts are suspended) cannot be followed by any determinative attitude (*adhyavasāya*) under usual circumstances, for in the immediately preceding moment there is no mental attention (*manaskāra*). And if there is no *manaskāra*, then it is impossible to establish that such a state existed. We cannot even remember it, for the seed of memory has not been sown by *vimarśa* or mental attention. And if we could remember it, or if the *vimarśa* or *adhyavasāya*, i.e. the determinative attitude, follows, then we have to say that thought (*cintā*) was not totally suspended, for it was somehow infected with with 'discrimination by words'. Hence it is established: since each sensory awareness is causally preceded by *manaskāra* and since it is also aware of itself (*sva-saṃvedana*), we cannot deny that besides perceiving or seeing, the state of sensory awareness must be performing the other function too, i.e. 'discrimination by words' (*vimarśa* or *śabdana*) (*Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*, p. 238).

In spite of the above, Abhinava says, we can still talk about a *nirvikalpaka-savikalpaka* 'non-conceptual and conceptual' distinction in this theory of perception. When impregnation by word (*śabdabhāvanā*) is contracted or withdrawn into itself (*samvṛta*), we can

call the state *nirvikalpaka* (non-conceptual) compared to another state where impregnation by word is 'expanded' or 'blown up' (*prasārita*); it is called *savikalpa* or conceptual perception or perceptual judgement when the cognitive state is expanded through impregnation of words.

Let us note that this theory is not simply repeating a platitude. For instance, some of us may feel that we cannot think without words, for thought is, after all, in Plato's language, the 'inner dialogue' of the soul. A modern philosopher, D. Davidson (1975), has said that this platitude is of a piece with 'primitive behaviourism' (of B. Watson, 1925, for example) which being 'baffled by the privacy of unspoken thought' may take comfort in the view that thinking is really 'talking to oneself', 'silent speech'. This platitude, it has been argued by Davidson and Quine, wrongly leads us to believe that since of thought and language, language may be easier to understand, it should have the privileged position over thought in our study. But indeed, language and thought are only two sides of the same coin. Davidson says, 'The two are indeed linked in the sense that each requires the other in order to be understood.' For Bhartṛhari, this linkage is also essential and fundamental like that between *prakāśa* (illumination) and *vimarśa* (discrimination) (see also Matilal, 1986, ch. 10).

Some philosophers today avoid the epistemologist's dilemma by claiming that even a pure sensory datum is elusive unless it is reinforced by language (Wittgenstein, 1958). In Quine's expression, the point is that this is how public language anchors experience arresting drift. But Bhartṛhari's claim seems to be even more fundamental. Here language anchors experience and experience anchors language. Of modern philosophers, W. Sellars (1963) has put the point in the strongest language:

> . . . all awareness of sort, resemblance, facts, etc.—in short, all awareness of abstract entities—indeed all awareness even of particulars—is a linguistic affair.

For Bhartṛhari's holism, all entities, even particulars, bits and pieces of matter, are abstracts, for they are abstracted from the whole, and it is no wonder that they are sort of linguistic affairs being generated by the word-impregnated awareness, by *vimarśa* or *vikalpa*.

Appendix I

MYSTICISM AND INEFFABILITY: SOME ISSUES OF LOGIC AND LANGUAGE

I

'Mysticism' has been loosely used for an assortment of views. The salient feature of these views is that they envision an integrated picture of the cosmos and promote a special type of human experience which is at once unitive and non-discursive, at once self-fulfilling and self-effacing. As William James has said, this experience has a 'noetic' quality, for the experiencer becomes directly aware of the ultimacy of the experience.[1] Some philosophers have questioned whether mystical consciousness takes us away from the realm of logical awareness and puts us within the realm of illogic. Does the mystical insight require us to look beyond the laws of logic, the so-called laws of non-contradiction and excluded middle? In connection with the word 'language', the sense of the word 'mysticism' acquires another dimension. The mystical reality is said to be beyond language, the mystic's experience is uncharacterizable—even uncategorizable. Words cannot describe it. The famous Upanishadic line:

> Wherefrom words turn back
> failing to reach, along with the mind

seems to coincide with another characterization of mysticism specified by James—ineffability.

To take the last point first. Is this claim that mystical reality transcends ordinary language to be taken simply as a warning that the mystic's description of his experience is utterly inadequate? Or, is it only a 'marker' or indicator for transforming the ordinary meanings (of words) into mystical meanings? Or, again, is it a banal way of

[1] W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, London (1902).

underlining the poverty of human language and the corresponding richness of mystical experience? This may well raise some further sets of questions. Can a very personal and intensely felt experience (e.g. love, hate, acute pain, agony) be properly described or expressed in language? Are pure sensations or sensory experiences effable? Can the expression 'I am in pain' communicate exactly what it is that I feel? Or as Al Gazali asked: How would one know what it is to be in a drunken state if one has never been drunk in one's life? This is only an oblique way of asking: How would one know what it is to have a mystical experience if one has never had such an experience? An old Bengali poem puts the same point as follows: How can one understand the pain caused by a snake-bite, if one has never been bitten by a snake? The salient issue here seems to be that my experience, my pain, is mine, and yours is yours, and I cannot get 'under your skin' to experience what you experience. Another trivium or banality.

Let us turn to another set of questions. What is a language for? Is it solely a means of communication? Can we communicate our most private and intensely felt experiences in language? And, by contrast does language not communicate information about a shared world? And shared experiences, perhaps? Can linguistic signs refer to unique particulars? Can uniqueness and particularity be captured by language? In raising these issues, we rise above banality, for they bring to the surface important and significant philosophical problems, whose clarification may be advanced by a close investigation of such difficulties as emerge in the study of mysticism. Indeed, this is one of the ways in which discussion of mystical experiences may contribute to our larger conceptual understanding of some fundamental philosophical dilemmas.

There is, for example, a well entrenched philosophical position that argues that our direct sensory experience has an element within it that cannot be put in words. Whatever truth may lie in this view, it is implicitly at work as the basis of many of our epistemological disputes over sensation, perception, conceptualization and knowledge. For example, some modern writers believe that when the Buddhist logicians (the Diṅnāga-Dharmakīrti School)[2] define sensory perception as free from, or uncontaminated by, conceptual construction (*kalpanā*) and describe the percept of such sensory awareness as 'self-grasped' and ineffable, they make appeal to a similar fact. Parallel

[2] Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārttika*, ed. Swami Dwarikadas Sastri, Varanasi (1968).

views of sensory perception (that 'pure' sensations are totally free from conception) are also present in other systems and other places, but I will concentrate on the supposedly Buddhist version with which I am more familiar. The view that endorses the ineffable character of what is called 'pure' sensation also endorses implicitly a particular view of language or 'effability'. That is, it should at least be required to explain what it is to be effable.

The alleged thesis is that what we grasp as the 'epistemologically first' is characterized by some such uniqueness as is hardly conveyable to others in language. Language captures similarities and shared characteristics between experiences. Hence what is conveyed by a linguistic symbol is the shared or shareable part of the experience. Uniqueness belongs to the particulars or the particularity of the experiencer.

II

Modern philosophers of language have enunciated a principle of expressibility, according to which it is held that for anything that a speaker wishes to communicate, there is an expression present in the speaker's language which can express it. Succinctly, this principle means: what can be meant can be said. I shall avoid a strict or elaborate formulation of this principle as it is well-known in the literature.[3]

Two comments related to this principle, however, are relevant. First, the principle is in some ways reminiscent of Bhartṛhari's celebrated thesis that there cannot be any awareness that is not 'interpenetrated' with words. Bhartṛhari was obviously talking about natural languages. His point was that expressibility constitutes the essence of any awareness (perceptual or otherwise) or any thought (a *pratyaya*). In fact, Bhartṛhari's thesis seems to be even more radical. He believed that as soon as a sensory reaction penetrates the cognitive level, it also penetrates the linguistic level, although this does not mean that we always have to use explicit verbal constructions. Cognizing is 'languageing' (*śabdanā*) at some implicit level. (See chs 11 and 12.) Second, the principle may not imply that whatever can be

[3] J. Searle, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge (1969), 19–21. J. J. Katz, 'Effability and Translation' in *Meaning and Translation*, eds. F. Guenthner and M. Guenthner-Reutter, New York (1978), 209–20. Earlier reference to be found in G. Frege, 'Compound Thoughts', *Mind*, 1963, 1–17; and A. Tarski, 'The Semantic Conception of Truth', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1944.

said can be understood by others. For if it does, it would exclude the possibility of what Wittgenstein called a 'private' language. But Wittgenstein's argument against a private language, against the possibility of such a language (a private 'sensation' language in particular), a language that is logically impossible for anyone apart from the speaker to understand,[4] is that it is logically impossible to have such a language (where individual words refer only to what can be known to the person speaking: to his immediate private sensations) because the use of a language involves rule following and there cannot be, as Saul Kripke has reminded us,[5] any 'private model' of rule following. For, obeying a rule, as Wittgenstein puts it, 'is a practice' (op. cit., para. 302), and therefore one cannot follow a rule privately. In other words, obeying a rule means doing the same as before, but what is meant by 'the same' here can only be defined by a *practice*—it is a practice in which more than one person participates. In Sanskrit philosophical writings, the word *vyavahāra* is sometimes used exactly in this way, i.e., as a *practice* in Wittgenstein's sense. These considerations do not eliminate the possible occurrence of private mental phenomena but certainly underline the intangibility or the indescribability of such inner phenomena. However, this is not the issue here. The point is that the principle of expressibility in a stricter interpretation would be taken to reject the possibility of a private language even in a Wittgensteinian sense. A loose interpretation of the principle, however, would not decide the issue for 'private' language.

The principle of expressibility (in its non-strict version) has been tacitly assumed to be a genuine characteristic of a natural language. Keeping this in mind, we may turn back and refer to our earlier questions regarding the alleged ineffability of mystical experience. It seems to us that this doctrine (call it IME), despite some resemblance, is not connected with the Diṅnāga-Dharmakīrti thesis about the non-verbalizable element in one's perceptual (sensory) experience. Even Bhartṛhari[6] would allow that there may be non-verbal sensory reaction. In fact, he gives an example of a man who, running along a village

[4] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford (1958), section 243.

[5] Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Languages: An Elementary Exposition*, Harvard (1982).

[6] Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya*. Kāṇḍa I and Kāṇḍa III, Part 1, ed., K. A. Subramania Iyer, Poona, Deccan College, 1963.

path, may have tactile sensation of the grass, which may be non-verbal (*Vākyapadīya*, verse I.115, *vṛtti*, see also ch. 12 above). But that is not the point of the mystic's claim. The only similarity lies in the fact that the mystic, much as the Buddhist, would regard verbalization or description by language to be a sort of 'distortion' of what is experienced; that is, the direct object of experience is put under a theoretical construct which contaminates, as it were, its pristine purity. Words such as *prapañca* and *vikalpa*, 'verbal proliferation', are used to underline this disvalue.

On the other hand, the IME does not appear to suffer from the Wittgensteinian argument against the notion of a 'private language', for it does not say that the speaker has a *private* language that none but he can understand. It seems, however, more pertinent to ask whether the IME will clash with the principle of expressibility if this principle is in any way regarded as constituting the essence (or a necessary property) of all natural languages. Traditional mystics normally use a natural language, and hence if the IME is to be seriously entertained as a hypothesis, it is with regard to some natural language or other. This leads to another question about natural languages, which arises as a consequence of recent studies in semantics and the persistence of semantical paradoxes.

III

The question is sometimes asked: are natural languages universal in the sense that (roughly) what can be said *about* a natural language can be said *in* it? In other words, if a natural language is *universal* then it can be used to say all there is to be said about its semantics. This is, very broadly speaking, the Tarskian formulation of the notion of universality of a language. It is well-known that in Tarski's view, 'true in L' may not be defined in L, and no language is universal if there is any concept which being expressible in some language cannot be expressed in the language in question. In this strict sense, however, no language may be universal. In fact this is a consequence of a strict Tarskian notion of universality as well as of the preponderance of semantical paradoxes.[7] This tends to cast doubt upon the intuitive assumption that a natural language has enough, sometimes unexplored, expressive power by virtue of which it may be regarded as universal

[7] For an elegant version of this issue, see R. Martin, 'Are Natural Languages Universal?', *Synthese*, 32 (1976), 271–91.

in the strict Tarskian sense. In fact it has been argued by Herzberger[8] that it is possible to show that with respect to a given language, there is a concept which is expressible somewhere but inexpressible in that language, by specifying a set of objects such that no term of the language has that set as its extension (but such that some term of another language has that set as its extension). If this is proven then no language (including a natural language) would be universal. This will have the rather counter-intuitive consequence that even a natural language will lose its alleged universality on pain of harbouring a contradiction. However, Herzberger's proof has its own problems[9] and we need not go into them here.

Even if we assume that for every language there is a concept (or a series of concepts) *not* expressible in that language (the unsettling difficulty is this: we do feel that we know and therefore can somehow express these concepts that our present language cannot express), it is still possible that a natural language can be deemed to express a significant portion (most, if not all) of its own semantics. This might explain the guiding intuition that a natural language is sufficiently rich to reflect *almost* the whole of its semantics. But what happens to our IME doctrine in that case? Presumably the non-universality of any language may allow that there are certain semantic truths that remain ineffable. But this will be an argument only in favour of the concept of ineffability. It will not lend any support in favour of IME.

IV

Before dealing directly with IME, it seems worthwhile to mention another aspect of the semantic issue which is relevant for the discussion of the notion of ineffability. A language may lack a term for a given concept, but that would be only a trivial and accidental sort of semantic failure. For such an accidental deficiency can presumably be remedied through familiar means. But if we take our language to be a system of symbols and if symbolisms of language are such that they by their nature are constitutionally incapable of expressing certain ideas or concepts, this will be a serious and real semantic failure and it will give credence to the notion of ineffability as a sound semantic concept.

[8] H. Herzberger, 'Paradoxes of Grounding in Semantics', *Journal of Philosophy*, 67 (1970), 145–67.

[9] R. Martin, op. cit.

It has been argued by Henle,[10] for example, that a commutative symbolism can be such that the principle of commutativity is inexpressible in it. The main point is that one's symbolism limits what can be expressed in it. Why should this be important for our discussion of IME? The answer lies in the fact that if words or concepts are like symbols and if our ordinary language is regarded as a system of symbols, then it may be that IME is based upon a claim that our present symbolism is inadequate or fundamentally flawed in its ability to express such experiences. Hence IME may be a valid doctrine from the point of view of semantics. But the fact is that our natural languages are not closed systems (they are 'creatively employable', they grow like living organisms, and they are self-referential), and hence the alleged inadequacy can be mended. I shall come back to this issue presently.

The general point so far analysed has been that our language or the conceptual system of mankind is limited in the sense that not everything which is knowable is 'sayable' within it. This is quite acceptable to an Indian Vedāntin for whom the Brahman experience is ineffable, or even to some Buddhists for whom the pure, translucent, *nirvāṇic* consciousness is such that the subject-object duality will completely disappear in it (hence it is completely free from 'verbal proliferations' *prapañca* or 'linguistic snares'). But the same point runs headlong into the basic thesis of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, according to which, whatever is knowable (*prameya* or *jñeya*) is 'sayable' (*abhidheya*).[11] It seems that the Naiyāyikas put too much faith in the expressive power of language. But this is simply of a piece with the strong intuition we seem to have about our natural languages: they are universal in the sense that they can talk about all languages including themselves. The prevalence of semantical paradoxes, however, forces us to question this intuition, as we have suggested earlier.

It may be noted at this stage that some of the semantical paradoxes or near paradoxes were also formulated in the Indian philosophical tradition. But the idea in the Indian tradition was not to regard them as antinomies. They were either used as *reductio-ad-absurdum* against an opponent's hypothesis, or regarded as resolvable. For example,

[10] P. Henle, 'Mysticism and Semantics', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 9 (1949), 416–22.

[11] Bimal Matilal, 'Mysticism and Reality: Ineffability', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 3 (1975), 217–232.

Nāgārjuna in his *Vigrahavyāvartanī* noted the following objection presumably of his *Nyāya* opponent: the 'Emptiness' is itself empty. The word 'emptiness' is a predicate property; when it is said that every *bhāva* is empty, we mean it is empty of its own nature. According to Nāgārjuna, this is truly applicable to all metaphysical statements about reality. But if all such statements are empty, then the statement 'all such statements are empty' is itself such a statement and has to be empty. But if this statement is empty to begin with, then what can show that all statements are empty? A Nāgārjunian would happily agree that this is a dilemma, but would not accept the consequence that it is inconsistent with his original position. He would argue that the so-called statement 'all such statements are false' is actually not a *proper* statement (i.e., it is a non-asserted statement) and hence the predicate 'is empty' can be applied to it only in a manner of speaking. In fact, Nāgārjuna admits as a consequence of his argument[12] that if all such statements are actually empty, it is still *unsayable* that all such statements are empty. For to say it is to falsify it. We have come back to the notion of ineffability in another way.

V

It was Bhartṛhari who said that there is no *expressive* word in our language for the word-object relation. This might be interpreted as asserting that this relation can only be *shown* but not *said* in our language. This point can be developed into a paradox, as has been done with great ingenuity by H. Herzberger and R. Herzberger (*Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 1981). We come back to ineffability again. This is particularly intriguing because Bhartṛhari himself explicitly propounded the strong thesis that we cannot be (properly) aware of something without the 'interpenetration' of word into it (in other words, if there is no *expressive* word, there is no *proper* awareness). It is however still logically compatible to contend that there may be ineffable objects but we cannot cognize such objects even if they exist, and if we somehow become aware of such an object it would be in some way effable, although something else may still be ineffable. (see ch. 12).

The IME doctrine, therefore, can be taken with a grain of salt. The notion of ineffability may be a sound semantic concept, as has been

[12] For more on this point see Matilal, *Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism*, Oxford (1977), and Matilal (1982).

discussed above. But our natural language is a very powerful tool and whether or not it can be regarded as 'universal' strictly in the Tarskian sense, it does seem to have not only the provision for expressing much of its own semantics (Martin) but also a great deal of unexplored expressive power. Even if we regard our natural language as a system of symbols (Henle) which restricts what we can say in it, it is possible for us (at least for some of us) to devise a better system or modify the present system and, in addition, use some ingenuity in order to express such concepts as we happen to be aware of, as well as to express our felt experience (insofar as such experience can be expressed or communicated). Thus I believe there are several ways by which our mystic-authors may (and actually do) *present* the so-called ineffable. I can identify at least three broad ways by which they accomplish it. This does not mean, however, that the mystics have been lying or deceiving themselves when they have been claiming IME. I take the IME doctrine to be a warning signal to the readers (or hearers) to alert them against a facile understanding (a misunderstanding) of what the mystics say, such an understanding being based upon a too literal interpretation of their words. The words of the mystics are generated by a flash of inspiration and a similar sympathetic feeling may be needed in order to fully grasp their message.

The description of the alleged mystical experience in ordinary language if treated as a description of just another (ordinary) experience, appears to be banal or even nonsensical, just as a poetic expression would appear if it were treated as a 'prosaic' description of some ordinary state of affairs. For example:

> If my beloved is with me, the scorching rays of the sun would be as cool as the moon. But if my beloved is away, the moonbeams are as scorching as the sun's rays. (Translated from a Sanskrit poem.)

If we take the emotional content away, this becomes almost a nonsensical statement. But in the context of poetry, where the emotion is transmitted to the reader, this expression takes on a new cloak of meaning, which is both beautiful and enjoyable. The language of the mystics has to be contextualized in the same way.

Consider this improvised version of the statement of an Indian mystic (Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa): 'I am like a doll made of salt. I went to measure the depth of the ocean full of saline water. I was dissolved completely and became one with the ocean. How can I measure the immeasurable?' Taken out of context, this story is

banal. But when it is understood in the light of its metaphysical basis—the Advaita Vedānta's thesis of the merging of the individual consciousness into the all-pervading Brahman consciousness—it assumes a different and profound significance for the disciple. The IME is thus a warning against trivialization of the language of the mystics.

VI

Three broad ways used by the mystics of India to 'express' the ineffable were alluded to above. Of these, one is the use of metaphor or poetic language. This is perhaps the chief one and the other two may be subordinate to it. A mystic may be a poet and a poet may also be a mystic. A mystic-poet's language is different from ordinary language. It conveys, as the Indian Dhvani theorists such as Ānandavardhana insist, more than what it says. The boundary of the effable domain is transcended by such poetic language and the mystics (e.g. the Upanishadic *ṛṣi* or sages such as Yājñavalkya and Uddālaka who were excellent poets) employ such poetic language to 'break the barrier' and reach the ineffable. A requirement of the *Rasa-dhvani* theory of Indian poetics is that the poets communicate their message (transmit the aesthetic pleasure to the mind of the reader) adequately, provided the readers are also *sahṛdaya* 'sensitive' or poetically inclined. Similarly, the language of the mystics can be adequately understood by those who are also mystically inclined. In any case the poetic quality of the mystical writings of the *Upaniṣads* can hardly be denied.

The second method is the use of contradictory predicates to characterize the experience or what is experienced. The same method is reflected in the formulation of paradoxical statements or near paradoxes in the writings of the mystically inclined philosophers. Besides, there is a well-entrenched philosophical tradition in Jainism where the word *avaktavya* 'ineffable'; 'inexpressible', is systematically interpreted as the *simultaneous* application of the contradictory truth-predicates to a metaphysical proposition, saying 'yes' and 'no' or, 'it is' and 'it is not' at the same time in the same breath in the same sense.[13] (Thus Vidyānanda explains it as 'the *joint* and *simultaneous* affirmation

[13] This is how the Jaina writers explain the third 'predicate' *avaktavya* (ineffable). This seems to be an admission that a contradiction in the strictest logical sense cannot be expressed in our natural language. No one can utter 'yes' and 'no' at the same time to have the same effect!

and denial' and distinguishes it from 'both affirmation and denial'.)[14] The idea is that we may affirm a proposition from one point of view or in one sense and also deny it from another point of view or in another sense. For example 'John does not drink' can be affirmed when it means that John does not take alcoholic beverages, but denied when it means drinking ordinary (non-alcoholic) beverages, water, etc. This will be, for the Jainas, a combined affirmation and denial. The same point can be illustrated with reference to time. For it may be facetiously noted that John is in the habit of drinking only after 5 o'clock in the evening. A proposition with indexicals can be true at one time and false at another time, or true in one place and false in another, or even true for one person and false for another. But, for the Jainas, the 'ineffable' is a separate unitary truth-like predicate. It is applied to one that is both true and false at the same time in the same sense from the same point of view, that is, it should be affirmed and denied *in the same breath*. The Jaina logicians argue that since it is impossible to express in language such joint affirmation and denial made in the same breath, they call it 'ineffable'. It transcends our ordinary mode of speaking. The truth-value here, we may say, can be *shown* but not *said* in the language. The expression 'ineffable' is only an indicator.

The third way of communicating or presenting what is ordinarily ineffable is to use the *neti neti* method or what is sometimes called negative dialectics. The simple meaning of *neti* is 'No is the answer'. The idea is almost implicit in the word 'ineffable' itself. Constructing a possible description or assigning a possible predicate to the mystical object, the mystic may then go ahead and negate it, and it is believed that if this is done repeatedly several times with a variety of possible descriptions, the general idea will get across. One may cite a number of Upaniṣadic passages dealing with Brahman as examples of this method. It was Yājñavalkya who for the first time used the nickname '*neti neti*' for this method, in the concluding part of his spectacular discourse on Soul or Brahman to his wife Maitreyī, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (ch. IV, section 5). In his commentary on this text Śaṅkara explains that although the truth or the Universal Soul or Brahman may be determined by hundreds of means, the final determination is through 'not this' and 'not that', i.e., through negation

[14] For further discussion of this view, see B. Matilal, *The Central Philosophy of Jainism (Anekāntavāda)*, Ahmedabad, (1981), 55.

of all other possible characterizations. In Yājñavalkya's description this is an experience where the subject-object duality completely collapses and merges into a unity, and hence it negates all characterizations that are ascribed from the dualist point of view.

The Mādhyamika Buddhist may also endorse this method. In fact Nāgārjuna had described *tattva*—'that-ness' or truth—in this way:

> The characteristic of *tattva* is such that it cannot be instructed by others, it is *not* diversified by diversifying speech, devoid of thought-construction, and *non*-dual in meaning.
>
> (*Madhyamakaśāstra*, 18.9)

In the beginning of his *Madhyamakaśāstra* Nāgārjuna characterizes the doctrine of dependent origination, the ultimate truth in Mādhyamika, by eight negative adjectives which take account of four contradictory pairs of positive characterization: '(Having) no cessation, no origination, no annihilation, no eternality, no single meaning, no multiple meaning, no arising and no going out of existence.'

VII

This method, of course, brings us back to the previous method, to paradoxes and contradictions. In fact, the notion of negation here creates problems for ordinary logical discourse. For negation of the two opposite alternatives may land us *in* a contradiction, if the law of the excluded middle is seriously entertained. In fact, the notion of negation is one of the fundamental concepts of any conceptual scheme, but it is also one of the most controversial and ill-understood notions across a wide philosophical spectrum. The discussion of IME, as well as of paradoxes and multiple-valued logic brings this problem to the fore. In talking about mulitple-valued logic we obviously pay little attention to the law of the excluded middle. We tend to define contradiction and negation in a different way. If we tolerate paradoxes in a discourse (as the saying 'paradoxes we live with' shows), we allow contradiction at some level. The mystics believe in the instrumentalism of paradoxes, which, according to them, helps us to look beyond the normal domain of discourse. I have elsewhere argued[15] that the Nāgārjunian 'no' may be interpreted as an illocutionary negation (*à la* Searle)[16] or a simple refutation which is *non-assertive* in the

[15] B. Matilal, *Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism*, Oxford (1977)

[16] John Searle, *Speech Acts*, (1969) 32–3.

sense that refutation of *p* is not incompatible with refutation of *not-p*. This will be possible if refutation (as distinct from classical and standard negation) of *p* is not equivalent to, or does not even imply, the assertion of *not-p*. This explanation, I contend, is quite in accord with Nāgārjuna's pronouncement: 'I have no (asserted) thesis to defend' (see *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, verse 29). I read this assertion as a claim that the statement about the truth of 'emptiness', that any thesis about reality is empty, is itself not an *asserted* statement (for otherwise this statement would itself either be false or face contradiction). A *non-asserted* statement may be a very peculiar statement indeed, and my suggestion is that it is as good as an *unstated* statement, i.e., ineffable. The emptiness of all metaphysical theses can be *shown*, not *stated* in language.

Our initial reaction to the notion of a non-asserted statement may be very unsympathetic. Some may even call the notion bizarre. For it is like saying something and then adding 'I did not say it'. Indeed, what Nāgārjuna does is to make a statement (even a *pratijñā*, statement of a thesis) and then add that he has not made that statement.[17] We may put the matter in another way. Having said or argued to show that Emptiness is a thesis that refutes all other metaphysical theses, Nāgārjuna adds that that is not a thesis. In a way this seems unavoidable in such a philosophical argument. Suppose we use the word 'impredicable' to mean 'no predicate can be applied to it'. A Vedāntin would readily agree: Yes, Brahman is impredicable. Now the question arises: Is impredicability a predicate? If it is, it falsifies the Vedāntin's proposition. Then of course we cannot say 'Brahman is impredicable', or if we say it we have to add 'but this is not a predication'.

If the above account of refutation is accepted then it would be possible to construct a position (*koṭi*) equivalent to the third 'no' of Nāgārjuna's four-fold negation. This 'no' rejects a proposition *as well as its negation*, both *p* and *not-p*. The four-fold negation is, as is well-known, saying 'no' to the four alternatives: is it? is it not? is it both? and is it neither? The third position is a *combined* rejection of the first two. But this position is also rejected by the third 'no'. The fourth or final 'no' here is however more intriguing. The position refuted in the last case may be seen to be equivalent to the third 'no', i.e., the third rejection, refutation of both *p* and *not-p*. But the result of the third 'no' seems again to have been refuted by the fourth 'no'. I shall

[17] B. Matilal, *Buddhist Logic and Epistemology*, D. Reidel Pub. Co., Dordrecht (1986), 25–9.

call it the *ultimate* negation, which refutes the constructed or the given universe of discourse. After the rejection of the combined rejection of 'it is' and 'it is not' we have here further *rejection* of that very rejection. It is like the mystic's saying: 'I do not wish to play this (language) game'. Imagine a tennis game, where either player tries to send the ball to the opponent's court, but at some point one player (our Mādhyamika friend) says 'enough of it' and refuses to send the ball back, i.e., refuses to play. We can thus once again *show* what is ineffable by means of what is effable in the language-game that we play. (If we do not wish to play the language-game, what else can we play?)

Obviously, there may be other ways to show what is ineffable and thereby vindicate or explain the IME. I have noted that our natural language possesses unexplored powers and contains unexperimented or hitherto unknown devices, and a creative and ingenious author, a mystic-poet, can easily explore such areas and experiment with such devices. They would then be able to successfully communicate or get the message across, and there would be no need to throw one's hands up in despair. Advancing the claim of IME is only a preliminary gambit employed to break open the boundary of effability and a timely reminder that not everything needs to be conveyed *literally* in linguistic expression.

Appendix II

SEMIOTIC CONCEPTIONS IN THE INDIAN THEORY OF ARGUMENTATION*

DEBATE AND LOGIC

Logic developed in ancient India from the tradition of *vādavidyā*, a discipline dealing with the categories of debate over various religious, philosophical, moral and doctrinal issues. There were several *vāda* manuals available around the beginning of the Christian era. They taught students how to conduct debate successfully, what tricks to learn, how to find loopholes in the opponent's position, and what pitfalls to be wary of. Of these manuals, the one found in the *Nyāya-sūtras* of Akṣapāda Gautama (*c.* AD 150) was perhaps the most systematic. We shall follow it in this exposition.

Debates in Akṣapāda's view, can be of three types: (i) an honest debate (called *vāda*) where both sides, proponent and opponent, are seeking truth, i.e., wanting to establish the right view; (ii) a tricky debate (called *jalpa*) where the goal is to win by fair means or foul; and (iii) a destructive debate (called *vitaṇḍā*) where the goal is to defeat or demolish the opponent, no matter how. This almost corresponds to the cliché in English: the good, the bad and the ugly. The first kind signals the employment of logical arguments, use of rational means and proper evidence to establish a thesis. It is said that the participants in this kind of debate were the teacher and the student, or the students themselves, belonging to the same school.

* Semiotics is a modern academic discipline. The conception of sign and the signified is however one of very ancient origin. Modern semioticians are interested in extending their notion of sign and thus semiotics has become an all-inclusive discipline. The old connection between philosophy of language and semiotics is obvious. The material in this Appendix was written as part of a larger article (in collaboration with Dr Jogesh C. Panda) under the title 'Sign Conception of India'. The article is due to appear in an *Encyclopedia of Semiotics*.

The second was, in fact, a 'winner-takes-all' situation. The name of the game was wit or intelligence. Tricks, false moves, and unfair means were allowed according to the rule of the game. But if both the debaters were equally clever and competent, this could be kept within the bounds of logic and reasoning. Usually two teachers of different schools would be participants. This used to take place before a board of jury called the '*madhyastha*' (the mediators or adjudicators) and a chairman, usually a king or a man with power and money who would organize the debate. The winner would be declared at the end by the consensus of the adjudicators.

The third type was a variety of the second type, where the winner was not supposed to establish his own position (he may not even have had a position) but only to defeat the opponent using logical arguments, or as the case was, tricks or clever devices. It was explicitly destructive and negative, hence philosophers like Vātsyāyana (*c.* AD 350) denounced this form of debate in unambiguous language. Again, a clever and competent opponent might force the other side into admitting a counter-position ('If you refute my thesis *p*, then you must admit the thesis *not-p*, therefore, please establish your thesis'), and if the other side yielded, the debate was decided in favour of the former, or it would turn into the second form of debate.

The notoriety of the third type was universal, although some philosophers argued (cf. Nāgārjuna, Śrīharṣa) that if the refutations of the opponent were done on the basis of good reason and evidence (in other words, if it followed the model of the first type, and the second type) then lack of a counter-thesis, or non-establishment of a counter-thesis would not be a great drawback. In fact, it could be made acceptable and even philosophically respectable. That is why Gauḍa Sānātani (quoted by Udayana, see Matilal, 1986, 87) divided the debates into four types: (i) the honest type (*vāda*), (ii) the tricky one (*jalpa*), (iii) the one modelled after the tricky one but where only refutation is needed, and (iv) the one modelled after the honest one where only the refutation of a thesis is needed. Even the mystics would prefer this last kind, which would end with a negative result (see Appendix I).

Apart from developing a theory of evidence (*pramāṇa*) and argument (*tarka*) needed for the first type of debate, the manuals go on to list a number of cases or situation-types where the debate will be concluded and one side will be declared as 'defeated' (or *nigraha-sthāna*, the defeat situation or the clinchers). The *Nyāyasūtra* lists 22 of them. For

example, (a) if the opponent cannot understand the proponent's argument, or (b) if he is confused, or (c) if he cannot reply within a reasonable time limit—all these will be cases of defeat. Besides, these manuals identify several standard 'false' rejoinders or *jāti* (24 of them are listed in the *Nyāyasūtra*), as well as some underhanded tricks (*chala*) like equivocation and confusion of the metaphor for the literal.

A. *The Nyāya Model*

Akṣapāda defines a method of philosophical argumentation, called the *nyāya* method or the *nyāya* model. This is the symbol for an ideally organized philosophical disputation. Seven categories are identified as constituting the 'prior' stage of the *nyāya*. It starts with an initial doubt whether *p* or *not-p*, and ends with a decision *p* (or *not-p* as the case may be). The seven categories are: Doubt, Purpose, Example, Basic Tenets, the 'limbs' of the formulated reasoning, Supportive Argument, and Decision. The first two categories are self-explanatory. The 'example' is needed to ensure that the arguments would not be just 'empty' talk. Some of the basic tenets supply the 'ground rules' for the argumentation.

The 'limbs' were the most important formulation of the structure of a logical reasoning. This was a landmark in the history of Indian logic. According to the *Nyāyasūtras*, there are five 'limbs' or 'steps' in structured reasoning. They should all be articulated into language. The first step is the 'statement of the thesis', the second the statement of reason or evidence, the third would be citation of an example (a particular case, well recognized and acceptable to both sides) which will illustrate the underlying (general) principle and thereby support the reason or evidence. The fourth is the showing of the present thesis as a case that belongs to the general case, for reason or evidence is essentially similar to the example cited. The fifth is the assertion of the thesis again as proven or established. Here is the time-honoured illustration:

Step 1. There is fire on the hill.
Step 2. For there is smoke.
Step 3. (Wherever there is smoke, there is fire), as in the kitchen.
Step 4. This is such a case (smoke on the hill).
Step 5. Therefore there is fire on the hill.

The Buddhists and others argued that this was too elaborate for the essential structure. All we need would be the first two or the first

three. The rest would be redundant. But the Nyāya school asserted all along that this nyāya method is used by the arguer to convince the others, and hence to completely satisfy the 'expectation' *(ākāṃkṣā)* of the other, you need all the five 'limbs' or steps. This is in fact a full-fledged articulation of an inference schema.

The 'supportive argument' is needed when doubts are raised about the implication of the middle part of the above inference schema. Is the example right? Does it support the evidence? Is the general principle right? Is it adequate? The 'supportive arguments' would examine the alternative possibilities, and try to resolve all these questions. After the 'supportive argument' comes the 'decision' one way or another.

Another seven categories were identified as constituting the 'posterior stage' of the Nyāya method. They consist of three types of debate (already mentioned): the group of trickery, the false rejoinders and the clinchers (also noted already), and the other important logical category, that of pseudo-reason or pseudo-evidence.

Pseudo-evidence is similar to evidence or reason, but it lacks adequacy or the logical force to prove the thesis adduced. It is in fact an 'imposter'. The *Nyāyasūtra* notes five such varieties. Although these five varieties were mentioned throughout the history of the Nyāya tradition (with occasional disagreement, e.g., Bhāsarvajña, who had six), they were constantly redefined to fit the developing logical theories of individual authors. The five were: the *deviating*, the *contradictory*, the *unestablished* or *unproven*, the *counter-balanced*, and the *untimely*.

Since there can be fire without smoke (as in a red-hot iron-ring), if somebody wants to infer presence of smoke in the kitchen on the basis of the presence of fire there, his evidence would be pseudo-evidence called the 'deviating'. Where the evidence (say, a pool of water) is usually the sign for the absence of fire, rather than its presence, it is called the 'contradictory'. An evidence-reason must itself be established or proven to exist, if it has to establish something else. Hence, an 'unestablished' evidence-reason is pseudo-evidence or a pseudo-sign. A purported evidence-reason may be countered by a purported counter-evidence showing the opposite possibility. This will be a case of the 'counter-balanced'. An 'untimely' is one where the thesis itself precludes the possibility of adducing some sign as being the evidence-reason by virtue of its incompatibility with the thesis in question. It is called 'untimely' because as soon as the thesis is stated, the evidence will no longer be an evidence.

B. *The Sign and the Signified*

All this implicitly spells out a theory of adequate sign. What we have been calling 'evidence', 'reason' and sometimes 'evidence-reason' may just be taken to be an adequate or 'logical' sign. The Sanskrit word for it is *liṅga*, 'a sign' or 'a mark', and what it is a sign for is called *liṅgin*, the 'signified', the 'marked' entity. This is finally tied to their theory of sound inference, that is, inference of the signified from the observation of the logical sign. This is the pre-theoretical notion of 'sign-signified' connection, as explained here. Note that this notion of 'sign-signified' relation is different from the 'signifier-signified' relation that we talked about in chapter 11.

A sign is adequate or 'logical' if it is not a pseudo-evidence, that is, a pseudo-sign. And the five types of pseudo-sign have already been identified. This is a negative formulation of the adequacy of the sign. A little later on in the tradition the positive formulation was found. The fully articulated formulation is found in the writings of the well-known Buddhist logician, Diṅnāga (in his theory of the 'triple-character' reason, see below). In fact, an adequate sign is what should be non-deviating, that is, it should not be present somewhere when the signified is absent. If it is present in that location, it would be 'deviating'. Thus, the identification of the first pseudo-sign captured this intuition, although it took a long time to get this fully articulated in the tradition. This may be called logical in this sense for it ensures the correctness of the resulting inference. Thus, we have to say: if the sign is there, can the signified be far behind?

C. *The Triple Nature of the Sign*

Diṅnāga (*c.* AD 500) formulated the following three conditions which a logical sign must fulfil:

1. It should be present in the case under consideration.
2. It should be present in a *similar* case or a homologue.
3. It should not be present in any *dissimilar* case, any heterologue.

Three interrelated technical terms are used here. The 'case under consideration' is called a *pakṣa*, the 'subject-locus'. The 'similar case' is called a *sapakṣa*, the 'homologue'. The 'dissimilar case' is called a *vipakṣa*, the 'heterologue'. These three concepts are also defined by the theory. The context is that of inferring a property *A* (the signified in our new vocabulary) from the property *B* (the sign) in a location *S*. Here the *S* is the *pakṣa*, the subject-locus. The *sapakṣa* is one which already possesses *A*, and is known to be so. And the *vipakṣa* is one

which does not possess *A*. The 'similarity' between the *pakṣa* and the *sapakṣa* is variously explained. One explanation is that they would share tentatively the signified *A* by sharing the sign *B*. An example would make it clear. Smoke is a sign of fire on a hill, because it is present on that hill, and it is also present in a kitchen which is a locus of fire, and it is absent from any non-locus of fire.

The third condition is easily explained. The sign must not be present when the signified is not present. For otherwise, as we have already noted, the sign will be *deviating*, and would be a 'pseudo-sign'. Why the second condition? Did Diṅnāga overshoot his mark? Is not the second condition redundant (for the first and the third seem to be sufficient to guarantee adequacy)? These questions were raised in the tradition by both the Naiyāyikas like Uddyotakara (*c.* AD 550), and the Buddhists like Dharmakīrti (*c.* AD 650). Some, such as Dharmakīrti, maintained that it was slightly repetitious, but not exactly redundant. The second condition states positively what the third, for the sake of emphasis, states negatively. The second is here rephrased as: the sign should be present in all or some *sapakṣas*. The contraposed version can then be formulated with a little ingenuity as: the sign should be absent from all *vipakṣas*. For *sapakṣa* and *vipakṣa*, along with the *pakṣa*, exhaust the universe of discourse.

Other interpreters try to find additional justification for the second condition to argue against the 'redundancy' charge. The interpretation becomes complicated, and we are not going into the details here (see various papers and the introduction in Matilal and Evans, 1986). Logically speaking, it seems that the second is redundant, but epistemologically speaking, this may be needed, i.e. a case of the co-presence of *A* and *B*, to suggest the possibility, at least, that one may be the sign for the other. Perhaps, Diṅnāga's concern here was epistemological.

D. *The Wheel of Reason-Sign of Diṅnāga*

When a sign is identified, it has three possibilities. It may be present in all, some or none of the *sapakṣas*. And likewise, it may be present in all, some or none of the *vipakṣas*. To identify a sign, we have to assume that it is present in the *pakṣa*, however (i.e., the first condition is already satisfied). Combining these, Diṅnāga constructed his 'wheel of reason' with nine distinct possibilities, which may be tabulated as follows:

1	2	3
+ vipakṣa + sapakṣa	− vipakṣa + sapakṣa	± vipakṣa + sapakṣa
4	5	6
+ vipakṣa − sapakṣa	− vipakṣa − sapakṣa	± vipakṣa − sapakṣa
7	8	9
+ vipakṣa ± sapakṣa	− vipakṣa ± sapakṣa	± vipakṣa ± sapakṣa
all = +	some = ±	none = −

Of these nine possibilites, Diṅnāga asserted that only two are illustrative of sound inference for they meet all the three conditions. They are nos. 2 and 8. Notice that either (− vipakṣa and + sapakṣa), or (− vipakṣa and ± sapakṣa) would fulfil the required condition. Diṅnāga is insistent that at least one *sapakṣa* must have the positive sign. No. 5 is *not* a case of sound inference. This sign is a pseudo-sign. For although it satisfies the two conditions 1 and 3 in C above, it does not satisfy condition 2. So one can argue that as far as Diṅnāga was concerned all the three were necessary conditions. The second row does not satisfy condition 2 and hence none of nos. 4, 5 and 6 are logical signs. They are pseudo-signs. Nos. 4 and 6 are called 'contradictory' pseudo-signs—an improvement upon the old *Nyāyasūtra* definition of contradictory. The middle one, no. 5, is called 'uniquely deviating' (*asādhāraṇa*), perhaps for the reason that this sign becomes an unique sign of the *pakṣa* itself, and is not found anywhere else. In Diṅnāga's system, this sign cannot be a sign for anything else, it can only point to itself reflexively or to its own locus. Nos. 1, 3, 7 and 9 are also pseudo-signs. They are called the 'deviating' signs, for in each case the sign occurs in some *vipakṣa* or other, although each fulfils the second condition.

E. *Development of the Wheel by Uddyotakara*

Diṅnāga's system of nine reason-types or sign-types was criticized by Uddyotakara, the Naiyāyika, who argued that it was incomplete because he did not consider at least two further alternatives: (a) a situa-

tion-type where there is no *sapakṣa*, and (b) a situation-type where there is no *vipakṣa*. The sign's absence from all *sapakṣas* (or all *vipakṣas*) should be distinguished from these two situations. Let us use '0' for the situation-type which lacks any *sapakṣa* or *vipakṣa* and '−' for the situation-type where the sign is present in *no sapakṣa* or *no vipakṣa* (as before). Hence combining the four possibilities, + *sapakṣa*, ± *sapakṣa*, − *sapakṣa*, 0 *sapakṣa* (no *sapakṣa*) with the other four (+, ±, −, 0) *vipakṣa*, we get sixteen in our wheel of sign, and the new wheel contains more sound inferences, i.e., adequate signs. For example,

This is nameable, because this is knowable.

Here 'knowability' is the sign, adequate and logical, for showing the nameability of an entity, for (in the Nyāya system) whatever is knowable is also nameable (i.e., expressible in language). Now we cannot have a heterologue or *vipakṣa* here, for (again, according to the Nyāya system) there is nothing that cannot be named (or expressed in language). Within the Buddhist system, another example of the same argument-type would be: This is impermanent because it is a product. For in Buddhism, everything is impermanent and a product. Later Naiyāyikas called this type of sign '*kevalānvayin*', the universal-positive-sign, that is, it is the characteristic of every entity.

Uddyotakara captured another adequate reason or logical sign, but he formulated the reasoning or inference negatively, i.e., in terms of a counterfactual. This was done probably to avoid the doctrinal quandary of the Nyāya school (to which he belonged) in which explanation of analytical or a priori knowledge always presents a problem. His typical example was:

The living body cannot be without a soul,
for if it were it would have been without life.

This is the generalized inference called 'universal negative'—'*kevala-vyatirekin*' in the tradition.

The subject *S* which has a unique property *B* cannot be without *A*,
for then it would have been without *B*.

Since *B* is a unique property of *S*, and since the presence of *A* and *B* mutually imply each other, there is no *sapakṣa*. But it is a correct inference. Bhāsarvajña (AD 950) did not like the rather roundabout way of formulating the inference-type. He said,

The living body has a soul,
for it has life.

But this would verge on unorthodoxy in Nyāya, for: (a) the statement of the thesis includes the sign already, and (b) there seems to be a necessary connection between having life and having a soul. The later Nyāya went back to the negative formulation but got rid of the reflex of the counterfactual that Uddyotakara had. If *A* and *B* are two properties mutually implying each other such that *B* can be the definiens (*lakṣaṇa*) and the class of those possessing *A* can be the definiendum, then the following inference is correct:

The subject *S* differs from those that are without *A*, for it has *B*. (And *A* is defined in terms of *B*.)

This seems to be equivalent to:

S has *A*, for it has *B*.

The verbal statement '*S* has *A* because it has *B*', however, does not expose fully the structure of this type of inference. For one thing, in this version it becomes indistinguishable from any other type of correct inference discussed before. In fact, the special feature of this type of inference is that the inferable property *A* is uniquely present in *S* only, and nowhere else, and hence our knowledge of the concomitance or pervasion between *A* and *B* cannot be derived from an example (where their co-presence will be instantiated) which will be a different case from the *S*, the case under consideration. In fact, *S* here is a generic term and it will be proper to say: all *S*'s have *A*, for they have *B*, and a supporting example will have to be an *S*, i.e., an instance of *S*. To avoid this anomaly, a negative example is cited to cover these cases. Thus we can say, a non-*S* is a case where neither *A* nor *B* is present. This will allow one to infer, for example, absence of *B* from absence of *A* and also (since *A* and *B* are co-present in all cases) absence of *A* from absence of *B*. But the evidence here is *B*. Hence by seeing *B* in all *S*'s we can infer absence of absence of *A*. Such a roundabout formulation was dictated by the peculiar nature of the Diṅnāga-Uddyotakara theory of inference.

To explain: In this theory, what legitimizes the inference of *A* from the sign *B* is the knowledge that *B* is a logical sign of *A*, and to have that knowledge we must have another knowledge that *B* has concomitance, i.e., invariable connection with *A*, and the second knowledge must be derived empirically, i.e., from an example where it is certain that *A* as well as *B* is present. Without such an example, we would not recognize *B* to be a logical sign of *A*. This limitation pre-

cluded the possibility of inferring *A* from *B*, where the case is such that all that have *A* are included in *pakṣa*, the subject-locus of the inference. For the convention is that the said example cannot be chosen from the members of the *pakṣa*, i.e. of the set of *S*'s. Hence the difficulty.

Uddyotakara saw this problem and extended the scope of the theory by saying that in these cases, a negative example, a non-*S* having neither *A* nor *B*, and absence of any counter-example (the sign's absence from all *vipakṣas*) will be enough to legitimize the inference. Udayana (*c.* AD 1050) later on defended this type of inference as legitimate. For, he said, if we do not admit such inferences as valid then our search for a defining property of some concepts could not be justified. Suppose we wish to define cow-hood: what is the unique property of a cow? Now, suppose having a dewlap is a unique property of a cow; it exists in all and only cows. What is the purpose of such a 'definition', if we can call it a definition (*lakṣaṇa*)? We can differentiate all cows from non-cows. How? We do it by the inference: Cows are distinct from non-cows, for cows have dewlaps. Of course, 'cows are distinct from non-cows' is equivalent to 'cows are cows', but when it is negatively put, the purpose of such inference becomes clearer.

F. *Concomitance or Invariable Relation*

Diṅnāga defined the invariable relation or concomitance of *B* with *A*, which legitimizes the inference of the 'signified' from the sign *B*, as follows (in *Pramāṇasamuccaya*):

> *liṅge liṅgi bhavaty eva liṅginy eva itarat punaḥ*
> When the sign (*liṅga*) occurs there, the signified, that of which it is a sign, has to occur there also. And if the sign has to occur somewhere, this has to occur only where the signified is occurrent.

This has been quoted frequently by the Naiyāyikas, Jainas and other logicians. This actually amounts to saying that all cases of *B* are cases of *A*, and only cases of *A* could be cases of *B*.

Dharmakīrti (*c.* AD 630) described the invariable connection in two ways. A sign could be the 'own-nature' or essential mark of *B*. That amounts to saying that *B* is either an invariable or a necessary sign of *A*. Thus, we infer that something is a tree from the fact that it is a beech tree, for a beech tree cannot be a beech tree without being a tree. This only defines invariability or necessary connection. The

second type of sign is one when we infer the 'natural' causal factor from the effect, as we do infer fire from smoke. It is also the nature or the essence of smoke that it cannot originate without originating from fire. Hence invariable relation means: (i) an essential or necessary property of the class, and (ii) a causally necessary relation between an effect and its invariable cause.

The later Naiyāyikas said that the absence of a counter-example is what is ultimately needed to legitimize the inference-giving relation between *A* and *B*. If *B* is the sign then *B* would be the logical sign if and only if there is no case where *B* occurs but *A* does not occur. If *A* occurs where *B* does not, that would be a counter-example to the tacitly assumed rule of inference, 'If *B* then *A*'. As we know from the truth-table of the propositional logic, 'If *B* then *A*' is falsified only under one condition, when there is not-*B* and *A*. Thus Gaṅgeśa (14th century AD) defines this relation (one of the fourteen definitions):

> *B*'s non-occurrence in any location characterized by absence of *A*

Alternatively, another definition is given:

> *B*'s co-occurrence with such an *A* as is never absent from the location of *B*.

The first is a rephrasing of the first definition of *vyāpti* in the *Vyāpti-pañcaka* of Gaṅgeśa. The second is an abbreviation of what is called his *siddhāntalakṣaṇa*.

Appendix III

MEANING IN LITERARY CRITICISM: *VAKROKTI* AND *DHVANI*

Philosophy, Linguistics and Literary Criticism—all these disciplines were, in classical India, intimately connected, and they were considered an integral part of the broader discipline, called *śāstra*. Thus, interaction between them was more a rule them an exception. This appendix will illustrate the point.

1. TWO THEORIES OF POETRY

'Poetryhood consists in ornamentation (of speech)'—this is one of the main theses of Kuntaka, a Kashmiri rhetorician of the eleventh century AD.

From early days, there were two main theories of poetry, that is, Sanskrit *kāvya*. One regarded *alaṃkāra*, i.e. embellishment of speech and its meaning, by which was meant alliteration, paranomasia etc. (*śabdālaṃkāra*) on the one hand, and simile, metaphor etc. (*arthālaṃkāra*) on the other, as external means to beautify speech. The other regarded *alamkāra* as the very essence of poetry. The idea in the first theory was to compare a piece of poetry with a body to which *alaṃkāras* would be added to enhance its beauty. This body-metaphor itself suggests several other things. One is to accept that the body as such, i.e., the 'body unornamented', can also be beautiful by itself. This has led to the well known controversy about *svabhāvokti*, that even an unadorned speech, a natural description or an unembellished description of nature, would constitute poetry. A later Ālaṃkārika has said, '*analaṃkṛtī punaḥ kvāpi*'[1]

The other point is that the body needs life or a soul in order to appear beautiful, and the question is: what constitutes that soul, or as

[1] Mammaṭa: *Kāvyaprakāśa*, ed. V. Jhalkikar, Poona, 1965, verse 4, Ch. 1.

they put it, *śarīrin*? The later writers' answer is that it is *rasa* or aesthetic rapture. But obviously *rasa* here stands for that property of poetic expression, by virtue of which such aesthetic enjoyment is evoked in the readers. All these later views hang together with an earlier view that was fundamental: *alaṃkāras* are external properties of the *kāvya*. Even Ānandavardhana's superlative genius and insight did not find this position unsatisfactory.[2]

In fact Ānandavardhana (*c.* AD 860) and Abhinavagupta (*c.* AD 980) turned further towards a different aspect of poetry, the meaning that is *shown* in poetry, but not *expressed* there explicitly. A third (or a fourth) power of the words was appealed to, the power of suggestivity, besides the primary power giving the lexical meanings and their constructs, and the secondary or indicative power giving the metaphorical meanings. (see ch. 3.)

In fact Abhinavagupta talks about three *well-recognized* 'powers' or 'functions' of words, instead of two (*abhidhā* 'denotative' that gives the lexical meanings, and *lakṣaṇā* 'indicative' that gives the metaphorical sense). In this, he seems to follow the Bhāṭṭa view of *abhihitānvaya* '(syntactic) connection after designation'. On this view, besides 'denotative' and 'indicative', there is another power called *tātparya śakti* by virtue of which the isolated word-meanings given by *abhidhā* together generate a connected whole, the sentence-meaning. (See also ch. 10.) Having described these three powers, Abhinava says that suggestivity or *dhvani* is the fourth power or function (cf. *caturthyāṃ tu kakṣāyāṃ dhvanana-vyāpāraḥ*, *Locana*, under I.4). This is summed up as follows:

> Therefore this is the fourth function distinct from the three, *abhidhā*, *tātparya* and *lakṣaṇā*. It is understood from the designation of such and other terms: *dhvanana*, *dyotana*, *vyañjana*, *pratyāyana*, *avagamana*.[3]

Poetry, according to Ānanda, must *mean* more than it says. And if what it *shows*, i.e. the suggested sense, exceeds (*atiśaya*, i.e. is more attractive or more beautiful than) the expressed sense, then it constitutes a better variety of poetry. In verse 13 of Uddyota I, Ānanda

[2] Ānandavardhana: *Dhvanyāloka* (with Abhinava's *Locana*), ed. P. Sastri, Banaras, C.S.S., 1940, second Uddyota, verse 17-19. See specially: '*Alaṃkāro hi bāhyālaṃkārasāmyād aṅginaś cārutva-hetur ucyate*' under verse 17. Also '*vivakṣā tatparatvena nāṅgitvena kadācana*' (verse 18 ab).

[3] *Locana*, Ibid.

defines *dhvani* and argues in the *vṛtti* that the *suggested* sense must be dominant over the expressed sense (*vācyārtha*) in order that the piece of composition be the proper locus of *dhvani*.[4]

Abhinava carefully distinguishes the suggested emotive meaning of the poetic composition from the 'indicative' metaphorical extension (cf. *lakṣaṇā*) of the word's meaning. Metaphorical extension of the word-meaning is forced upon us (all hearers or readers) when the lexical meanings of two words forming a sentence do not *fit*, e.g. 'the village is on the river' or 'Newcastle-upon-Tyne'. The word 'river' by metaphorical extension should mean here 'the river-bank'. Abhinava says: *mukhyārtha-bādhāyāṃ lakṣaṇāyāḥ praklptiḥ* ('*lakṣaṇā* arises if the primary meanings are obstructed'), under I.4 in *Locana*. The suggested emotive meaning or the poetic meaning flashes in the mind of the sensitive reader only after the literal or ordinary meaning of the sentence has been fully comprehended. Here the condition, i.e. the lack of fitness ('misfitting' = *ayogyatā*), for which the service of *lakṣaṇā* or metaphorical extension is required, is conspicuous by its absence.

Ānanda was more concerned with the emotive meaning of poetry—poetry being evocative of aesthetic pleasure in the sensitive reader. When emotions are 'suggested' (i.e. evoked obliquely) the beauty is all the more enhanced, the aesthetic rapture excels. Alamkāras etc., can only be subservient to this evocation of aesthetic enjoyment, called *rasa*. Thus, the first theory, we can say, was concerned with the depths of meaning and ambiguity of the literary composition.

The second theory, however, regarded *alaṃkāras* as natural or essential properties of poetry. I have deliberately left *alaṃkāra* untranslated here. '*Alaṃkāra*' does not simply mean 'ornament'. An ornament is what *adds* to the beauty (cf. *alaṃ karoti*) but, in addition to that, *alaṃkāra* may be an *essential part* of the beauty itself. Vāmana (*c.* AD 800) inadvertently got it right in the first section of his first chapter. He used the term *alaṃkāra* in two distinguishable senses; in one sense, *alaṃkāra* stands for beauty or beautification in general. He says, 'poetry is understood to be attractive to us because of *alaṃkāra*' (1.1.1) and '*alaṃkāra* means beauty' (1.1.2).[5] Etymologically the word may mean making something beautiful or beautification (for

[4] Ibid., verse 13, and three *saṃgraha śloka* under it.

[5] Vāmana: *Kāvyālaṃkāra-sūtra-vṛtti*, ed. J. Vidyasagar, 3rd edn., Calcutta, 1922; *Kāvyaṃ grāhyam alaṃkārāt*, 1-1-1, *saundaryam alaṃkāraḥ*, 1.1.2.

alaṃ = bhūṣaṇa).[6] But there is another sense, when we derive the word in the instrumental case: that which beautifies (cf. *alaṃ kriyate anena*). Then it will refer to the usual item, simile, alliteration, etc. It was Bhāmaha[7] (*c.* AD 700) who was also aware of the second view and defended it explicitly. He implicitly accepted that *alaṃkāra* constitutes the nature of poetry. This consists in the composition of speech and its meaning in an 'oblique' (*vakra*) manner. It is not only what you say but also how you say it. He asserts (I.6): The embellishment of speech consists in the oblique composition of words and the oblique presentation of meaning. In Bhāmaha's slightly loose terminology: *vakrokti = atiśayokti = alaṃkāra*. *Vakrokti* means strikingness in word and meaning. *Atiśayokti* means a non-standard way of speech, something that is not 'the ordinary run of the mill' but speaks of a meaning that excels (*vide* II.81, 84, 85). In II.85, Bhāmaha says that in all alaṃkāras there is 'strikingness in speech' (*vakrokti*). In this vein, he rejected the idea that a *vārtā*, a plain report such as 'The sun has set, the moon is up, birds go to their nests' can constitute poetry (II.87). Some scholars (Raghavan, etc.) have said that this is not a rejection of *vārtā*. But I believe Bhāmaha meant it as such. Daṇḍin (*c.* AD 700) retorted, quoting the same example that this would be good poetry provided it suggests a special time or state. Daṇḍin's argument leaves no doubt that some *ālaṃkārikas* did reject *vārtā*. Much later in the history, Mammaṭa (*c.* AD 1050) (5th chapter of *Kāvyaprakāśa*) argued that the words constituting the example of *vārtā* may suggest at least nine different meanings (to different types of persons).[8] The idea is that the said expression is highly suggestive, and if suggestivity constitutes good poetry this would be good poetry. Bhāmaha explicity rejected *hetu*, *sūkṣma* and *leśa* on the ground that they do not consist in the obliqueness of speech (*vakrokti*). Talking about *svabhāvokti*, Bhāmaha hesitatingly says that some regard it (description of objects or events as they are, *tadavasthātvam*) as an *alaṃkāra*. This ('*kecit*' in Bhāmaha) might have been a preliminary to the rejection of *svabhāvokti*. Here Daṇḍin contributes again. Daṇḍin defines and illustrates three types of *svabhāvokti* and argues that this could be an *alaṃkāra*. He argues that although 'telling as it is'

[6] As the lexicographer says: *Alaṃ bhūṣaṇa-paryāpti-śakti-vāraṇavācakam.*

[7] See Bhāmaha: *Kāvyālaṃkāra*, ed. P. V. Naganath Sastry, Tanjore, 1927, for all the references below.

[8] See Mammaṭa, Ch. 5.

(= *svabhāvokti*) is what dominates the *śāstras* (that is, a philosophical or scientific treatise as opposed to *kāvya*, poetry), it might be desirable (*īpsita*) in *kāvya* too. In fact, Daṇḍin in verse II.362 clearly divides 'poetic speech pattern' (*kāvya*) into two: natural and oblique. Hence 'telling as it is' cannot be ignored in *kāvya*, it does constitute an *alaṃkāra*, says Daṇḍin.[9]

Under verse 1 of Uddyota I, Ānanda quotes a verse composed by (according to Abhinavagupta) Manoratha, a poet contemporary with Ānanda, who argues that the so-called *dhvani* is a figment of the imagination belonging to persons of lesser intelligence. It continues: the stupid people praise a piece of poetry as full of *dhvani* 'suggestivity', when it does not contain any meaning that pleases the mind; being devoid of *alaṃkāra*, it does not consist of skilfully composed words and does not have any *vakrokti*. The mention of the word '*vakrokti*' here is significant. For if *vakrokti* were only a species of *alaṃkāra*, it would not merit a separate mention. However, Manoratha may be referring to the view that regards *vakrokti* as the basis of all *alaṃkāras*, as the essence of beautification in poetry. Abhinava's comment here is important.

Abhinava says that the word *alaṃkāra* refers to the *arthālaṃkāras*, simile, etc. 'Skilfully composed words' refers to the *śabdālaṃkāras*, alliterations, etc. And '*vakrokti*' refers to the *guṇas* pertaining to the sound and sense. In other words, *vakrokti* refers to *utkṛṣṭa saṃghaṭanā*—excellent arrangements of words, etc. It may refer to style or *rīti*. Abhinava notes further that there is an alternative explanation of *vakrokti* as the common property of all *alaṃkāras*. However, if we accept this sense, the fault of repetition cannot be avoided.

Now let us consider Kuntaka. (*c.* AD 950) What P. V. Kane[10] vaguely called the *alaṃkāra* school, of which, according to him, Bhāmaha was the 'oldest extant exponent' (p. 83), may have had its last, and in my view, the most important, exponent in Kuntaka. Philosophically speaking, Kuntaka was a holist and an essentialist. For him, the *alaṃkāra* constitutes the very essence of poetry. And this is how he proves it. A *kāvya* 'poem' is something that a poet does or creates. What a poet makes is poetry. A poet makes 'ornamented speech'. Ornamentalism consists in introducing obliqueness or strikingness

[9] Daṇḍin: *Kāvyādarśa*, ed. R. Raddi, Sastri, Poona, 1938. See also V. Raghavan: *Some Concepts of the Alaṃkāra Śāstra*, Madras, 1942.

[10] P. V. Kane: *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, Delhi, 1961, p. 372–8.

in speech such that it will rejoice or delight the reader (*tad-vid-āhlāda-kārin*, I.7). Hence a piece of poetry = a poet's making = ornamented speech. Thus poetryhood is ornamentalism = introduction of obliqueness, uncommonness, non-banality. Bhāmaha's insight was right. In every *alaṃkāra* (call it $alaṃkāra_2$, a term that denotes simile, metaphor, etc.) there is inherent obliqueness. It is what distinguishes poetry from ordinary speech, banal reports, newspaper reports, etc. Thus, the second view, instead of emphasizing the deeper meaning which a sensitive reader derives from poetry, concentrates on the medium through which the message is communicated and believes that the medium is inseparable from the message.

Kuntaka can be described as a holist. In this he was explicitly influenced by Bhartṛhari among the grammarians. He believed that the distinction between the *alaṃkāra* and the *alaṃkārya*, the 'ornaments' and that which is being ornamented (remember our old 'body-metaphor': a poem is like a body where ornaments are added for the sake of beauty), is totally artificial. The connection between them is one of inseparability. A poem is a whole, its beauty, or even the means for beautification, cannot be separated from it. To put it in another way, if we can take $alaṃkāra_1$ out, i.e., away from the poetic speech, then it loses its poetryhood (*kāvyatā*). A body, even a body where there is a soul, can remain as it is, without the beautifying ornaments. But a poem cannot remain a poem without the *alaṃkāra* (= ornamentation = the poet's making = *kavikarma*). This follows from the very comprehensive definition of *alaṃkāra* as *kavikarma*. In fact, it is wrong or misleading to equate $alaṃkāra_1$ with what is known in the West as a figure of speech in a formal scheme. Even Abhinava indirectly endorses Kuntaka's view of $alaṃkāra_1$ as the special charm invested in the composition by the poet's imagination.

II. THE GRAMMATICAL MODEL FOR LITERARY CRITICISM

Now the question unavoidably arises, the question that is usually raised against any holistic framework: How are we supposed to study and analyse the *alaṃkāras* in the second sense, i.e. $alaṃkāra_2$, which activity constitutes the proper subject matter of *alaṃkāra-śāstra*? We are supposed to discuss and classify similes, metaphors, alliterations, etc. But how? Kuntaka looked towards Bhartṛhari for the answer. Indeed, for Bhartṛhari and the Sanskrit grammarians, a sentence is an unbreakable, impartite whole (ch. 8). But how then are we supposed

to study words, their formation out of roots and affixes etc., which constitutes the proper subject matter of grammar? Bhartṛhari[11] answers this question by referring to what he calls the *apoddhāra* method. We follow the method of extraction and abstraction. We apply this method and operate it upon the given reality, a whole sentence. We reach individual words, and individual roots or suffixes through abstraction. We *artificially* constitute or create in this way words, roots and suffixes, the subject-matter of our study in grammar. The word 'artificially' means that they lack *givenness* or that their existence is a borrowed existence. Thus Bhartṛhari and other holists try to drive the point home by saying that the whole is real while parts are not, for they are constructs or abstracted bits. The natural home of a word is the sentence in which it occurs. Kuntaka refers to this argument of the holist, and on the basis of this analogy, he explains that although the *alaṃkāra* and the *alaṃkārya* are inseparable, and constitute a whole, a distinction is made by the *apoddhāra* method, only because it is instrumental (*upāya*) to our study and understanding of the nature of poetry, which constitutes the proper subject matter of *alaṃkāraśāstra*. The so-called *alaṃkāras*, simile, etc., are therefore *artificially* abstracted from pieces of poetry much as the words are abstracted from the sentence. These *alaṃkāras* have only borrowed existence. They essentially belong to poetry; without poetry they have no *locus standi* outside. The expression 'a *gayal* is like a cow' is in this way not a case of *alaṃkāra* (although there is a simile) for it is not a piece of poetry. Similarly, 'There is fire on the hill because there is smoke' would not be a case of *hetu alaṃkāra*, although a reason is being assigned here, because it is a bland statement without any tinge of obliqueness or beauty. Kuntaka explains *apoddhṛtya* as *nikṛṣya*, i.e. *pṛthak pṛthag avasthāpya*, 'extracting, putting them separately (in awareness)'. He further glosses '*yatra samudāyarūpe tayor antarbhāvas tasmād vibhajya*', i.e. analysing or dividing them from the whole in which they inhere. The main point here is to understand the instrumental nature of this division. Every holist has to appeal to a form of instrumentalism as regards the extracted parts. Thus Kuntaka was no exception (cf. *tad-upāyatayā*).

From what has now been said, we may still doubt whether Kuntaka was really a believer in the *alaṃkāra* theory, or to use Kane's expression,

[11] Bhartṛhari: *Vākyapadīya*, Kaṇḍa 2, verse 10.

an exponent of the Alaṃkāra School. For on this theory, as I have already noted earlier, the 'body-metaphor' along with its various implications should be given up and the metaphor of the whole and 'naturalness' (essentiality or inseparableness) of *alaṃkāra* in poetry should be emphasized. The individual *alaṃkāras* do seem to be separable as a necklace is separable from the neck or the body. Kuntaka dispels this doubt in no uncertain terms:[12]

> This is the ultimate meaning (*paramārtha*) here: poetryhood, that is, the poet's making, belongs to something that is existent (*sataḥ*), where all parts have vanished into a whole (i.e., an impartite whole, *nirasta-sakalāvayava*) and which has *alaṃkāra* (as its essential constituent). Thus, the thesis is: poetryhood belongs to what has *alaṃkāra* 'ornaments', and it is not the case that *alaṃkāras* are added to, or connected (*yoga*) with, the poem.

I have mentioned the Kuntaka thesis, which may be put as follows:

1. Obliqueness (*vakratā*) in speech underlies or pervades all *alaṃkāras*.
2. There cannot be any poem without such an *alaṃkāra*.
3. Therefore obliqueness in speech constitutes poetry.

And his argument is:

4. If poetry is what a poet makes, then we know that the poet makes or creates or introduces the required obliqueness in the middle of plain or banal expressions. Therefore, obliqueness = the property of being made by the poet = poetryhood.

III. CRITICISM OF THE THEORY OF OBLIQUENESS IN PRESENTATION

I shall now develop a critique of this thesis, which will include some traditional criticisms and some new ones.

(1) Daṇḍin hit the nail right on the head when he argued that even the plain expressions 'the sun is set, the moon is up, . . .' can be part of some poetical composition in a suitably chosen context. This was promptly picked up by the later Dhvani theorists (e.g. Mammaṭa), as I have noted earlier. The problem is that banality or plainness in the composition of words and sounds does not imply plainness in meaning. Meaning is given by the context and the poet may of course use plain words in order to generate profoundly charming meaning. Kuntaka might have answered the charge as follows. Obliqueness in

[12] Kuntaka: *Vakrokti-jīvita*, ed. S. K. De, Calcutta, 1928, p. 7, *vṛtti* under verse 6, Ch. 1.

meaning (*artha*) is also a constituent of poetry. In verses I. 9 and 10, Kuntaka explicitly states:

> Although many other words are there (to convey the same meaning), the (poetic) word is what uniquely conveys the sole meaning intended by the poet. The meaning is what beautifully vibrates and charms the hearts of the sensitive reader. Both (word and meaning) are ornamented. This ornamentation of both is said to be the obliqueness in speech, a masterly way of speaking.

In other words Kuntaka can absorb the criticism of Daṇḍin and turn the counter-example into a proper example covered by his definition of poetry. His intention was to distinguish the ordinary mode of speech, or the cart drivers' language (*śākaṭika-vākya*), from the poetic language. But the problem is that even the cart drivers' plain or vulgar language can be accorded with beauty or obliqueness by setting it in an appropriate context. For example in the Viṣkambhaka in *Abhijñā-śākuntala*, the fisherman's as well as the policeman's plain and rough and ready speech became part of an excellent *dṛśyakāvya*. In short, we all know that the plain man's speech must be distinguished from *kāvya*, but the element of contextuality makes it impossible to a wholesale or blanket rejection of the plain man's speech.

(2) A *svabhāvokti*, as insisted upon by Daṇḍin, may be simply a graphic description and this may indeed be a piece of good poetry. Two well-known examples are often cited: one from *Abhijñāna-śākuntala: Grīvābhaṅgābhirāmam* etc. The other is *yaḥ kaumāraharaḥ* etc. Kuntaka seems to tackle this objection in verses I. 11–15. First, if the term *svabhāvokti* means description of the 'nature' (*svabhāva*) of the object or event, then any description can be such a description, for what else can we describe besides some 'nature' of the object? If such a description is an *alaṃkāra* 'ornament', what it is that is being ornamented here? Second, an object that lacks a *svabhāva* 'nature', would be a fictitious object, a non-object, and in fact it would be indescribable, ineffable. Objects are denoted by words on the basis of their having some 'nature' or other. Hence any possibility of description in language implies description of 'nature' (*svabhāvokti*). Third, since one cannot climb upon one's own shoulder, the 'body' of a poem, the 'nature' (*svabhāva*) to be described, cannot ornament or adorn itself.

Kuntaka's argument is somewhat a priori. It is a dialectic based upon what is meant by *svabhāvokti* and what it is to be an *alaṃkāra*. But the underlying point is probably that the 'body' metaphor, as

well as the externalist view of *alaṃkāra* that goes along with it, is open to serious attack. The opponent in calling *svabhāvokti* an *alaṃkāra* has made his externalist position standing on its head, for the duality of *alaṃkāra* and *alaṃkārya* collapses.

(3) We should note that the well-known verses of Kālidāsa or Śīla-bhaṭṭārikā, that are cited as examples of *svabhāvokti alaṃkāra* can be easily regarded as pieces of high-class poetry even by a follower of Kuntaka. It is not difficult to discover why such verses are charming to us and wherein lies the mastery of the poetic art (*kaver vyāpāraḥ*) that introduces strikingness in the expression. So the dispute here is not about the *lakṣyas* or definienda, but about the defining or distinguishing characteristic itself (*lakṣaṇa*). Is it the obliqueness in speech? or, the profundity in the suggestiveness? or, the aesthetic rapture that it generates in the sensitive reader? Kuntaka opts for the first.

(4) Most critics of Kuntaka, traditional as well as modern, accuse him of being much too engrossed in the exterior of poetry. This is to be distinguished from what I have called the externalist view above. The 'externalist view', in my opinion, is that which regards *alaṃkāras* as external, and hence in principle separable, properties of *kāvya*. Some early Ālaṃkārikas seem to have upheld such a view. Kuntaka rejected it. But critics charge that Kuntaka was concerned only with the exterior of poetry, with *alaṃkāra*, *guṇa*, *rīti*, *doṣa*, etc. But this charge is unfounded. Kuntaka did not distinguish between 'exterior' and 'interior'. He was more concerned with the *vyāpāra* 'function' of the poet, with what is it that the poet does to the ordinary modes of speech (he also calls it *kavi-kauśala* (II.3,4)). He was seriously concerned with *pratibhā*, the poetic genius or insight, that so-called 'philosopher's stone' which by its mere touch turns iron into gold, ordinary banalities into poetic expressions.

IV. THREE ROUTES TO APPRECIATION OF POETRY

We can think of *three* main ways of approaching the study of poetry. One is by concentrating upon the beauty in the external appearance of poetry. The second is by concentrating upon the poet's power or activity. The third is by concentrating upon the pleasure in the aesthetic judgement, the enjoyment that a sensitive reader derives from poetry. The first route was taken by the old (*cirantana*) Ālaṃkārikas. The second was taken by Kuntaka, and the third by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka. Ānandavardhana no doubt followed the third route but created a new dimension in it. As the readers, especially sensitive

readers, are suggestible, it is the power of suggestion of *rasa* or aesthetic pleasure found in poetic expressions, that became the focus of attention of Ānanda. It is, of course, true that both Ānanda and Abhinava were meticulously conscious of the role of the poetic genius or *pratibhā* in the composition of poetry. They made some of the important comments about *kavi-pratibhā*. However, their attention was directed towards the sensitive reader, the *sahṛdaya*, for whom the poetry is composed. Ānanda says under verse 13 of the first Uddyota:

> *lakṣye tu parīkṣamāṇe sa eva sahṛdayahṛdayā hlādakārī kāvyatattvam*
> The essence of poetry is in the delight it imparts to the mind of the *sahṛdaya*.

Abhinava gives the best description of a *sahṛdaya* 'a sensitive reader'.[13]

> *yeṣām kāvyānuśīlanavaśād viśadīkṛte mano-mukure varṇanīyatanmayī-bhavanā-yogyatā iti*
> The sensitive readers are those whose mirror-like minds are made crystal clear by their constant practice of the reading of poetry in such a way that their minds become identified with whatever is described in poetry.

Even Kuntaka was aware of the need for a sensitive reader for the proper appreciation of *kāvya*. He said in verse 7, ch.1, where he apparently defined poetry: '*tad-vid-āhlāda-kāriṇī*'. Here *tad-vid* = *sahṛdaya*. However, he emphasized the poet's talent—the second route.

Kuntaka, being well aware of the other two routes, was alone in following his own insight; he looked at poetry from the poet's own point of view: The beautiful image is not simply a replica of what naturally exists. It is where *matter* is given *form*. (Compare his comment under verse 7: *tathāpi kavipratibhā-prauḍhir eva prādhānyenā'vatiṣṭhate*, p. 13). Thus it seems to be in line with one of the widespread conceptions of art in the West. Art is what gives *form* to *matter*, it adds to nature, informs *hyle* with *eidos*.

V. POETRY VS. PAINTING

I shall conclude with an analogy used by Kuntaka himself. He believed that the poet's genius is uncategorizable. He called it '*kimapi*' or '*ko'pi*'. He compared the poet and his poetry-composition with the

[13] *Locana* under verse 1, Uddyota I, of *Dhvanyāloka*.

painter and his painting a picture. He brings it out nicely, while discussing *vākya-vakratā:*[14]

> The uncategorizable genius of the poet creates beauty just as a painter paints a picture using a charming canvas, different lines of measured length, colours and tones of different shades.

He explains (I summarize):

> The painter uses all those different items, none of which contain beauty, but his genius creates beauty out of the ordinary things. The poet similarly uses different means, rhetorics and other qualities of word and meaning, style (*rīti*), but real beauty does not reside in any one of them singly. It is created by the magic touch of the poet's own genius.

Kuntaka identified the function of writing poetry as introducing 'obliqueness' so as to create beauty and please the sensitive reader. In this respect he differed from the old Alaṃkāra school. He was aware of the theory about the suggestive power of poetry that was introduced by Ānanda. But a follower of Kuntaka might argue that this takes us away from the poet, i.e. his poetic genius as well as his own function, to the side of the readers and why and how they enjoy poetry. It is the reader who is suggestible. But the mystery of creation of beauty must be as important as the experience or enjoyment of beauty. An artist creates an art object out of ordinary materials. It may be equally important to understand how he does it, as it is to appreciate or enjoy the beautiful result.

Kuntaka intended to show an alternative way of critically appreciating poetry. Instead of looking for poetic words and expressions that suggest meanings that evoke emotions of love, etc., in the reader, one can concentrate in the wonderful workmanship of poetic genius which makes poetic expressions and poetic meanings totally inseparable from each other, where beauty consists in their wholeness. It is rather unfortunate that the later Sanskrit tradition ignored it. It was no doubt the unavoidable influence of Ānanadavardhana and Abhinavagupta that eclipsed the glory and genius of Kuntaka. Perhaps, the philosophical leaning of the *Rasa-dhvani* theory won the day. Poetics was taken over by philosophers who dealt with the philosophy of awareness and philosophy of language. In this context, Kuntaka's

[14] Kuntaka, ch. III, verse 4.

was a lone voice. His approach was that of an artist towards the study of poetry, the approach which looks upon art that adds form to matter, invests *hyle* with *eidos*, flavours straightforward natural speech with a tinge of obliqueness to create beauty: Poetryhood consists in beautification, *tattvaṃ sālaṃkārasya kāvyatā*.

The emotive meaning of poetry may be important, but it is equally important to understand the way by which that meaning is conveyed. For, it may be that the 'suggested' emotive meaning is indistinguishable, hence inseparable from the manner of its presentation.

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